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JOHN ADAMS AND JAY'S TREATY

by

EDGAR ARTHUR QUIMBY

B.A. University of Mississippi, 1958

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

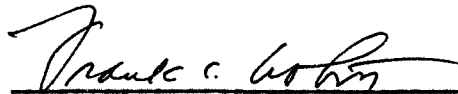
Master of Arts

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

1963

Approved by:


Chairman, Board of Examiners


Dean, Graduate School


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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

John Adams was the only leading official in George Washington's two administrations who was not influential in formulating the government's policies toward Great Britain during the Anglo-American imbroglio which plagued the United States until after the ratification of Jay's Treaty in 1795. This was the case, despite the fact that Adams was a seasoned diplomat, a former minister to the Court of St. James and the vice-president of the United States.

Adams was isolated from the diplomatic machinery of the new central government because he refused to identify the well-being of the American Republic solely with the political fortunes of the burgeoning Federalist party. Nonetheless, Adams believed that it was imperative for the United States to seek satisfactory relations with Great Britain in order to permit a greater flow of commerce and to free the American-Canadian frontier from border conflict.

Lacking the influence to sway his colleagues in the Washington administration, Adams used his position in the Senate, whenever possible, to prevent the enactment of legislation that might have ruptured the peace between the two English-speaking nations during the last decade of the eighteenth century. The role which Adams played in the Senate, as its presiding officer, and the comments he made concerning the events taking place around him revealed not only the Vice-President's dedication to peace and neutrality, but his vital concern for the future of the Republic.

During the course of events Adams plotted the growth of political parties in the United States while condemning their presence. He measured his chances for succeeding Washington in the presidency in light of Jay's Treaty and he strove to remain neutral while partisanship flamed around him. And after the treaty was ratified, Adams concluded that the results of Jay's negotiations were a great step toward better relations with Great Britain and beneficial to the United States as well.

CHAPTER I: A MISSION TO LONDON

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A MISSION TO LONDON

In the early years of the American Republic, foreign relations consumed the energies of both the Confederation and Federal governments. The United States was often prey to the imperial designs of three powerful European states--England, France and Spain--whose possessions in North America still remained the stage for inter-hemispheric conflicts in the late eighteenth century as they had in the seventeenth. England, the Americans' wartime enemy, sought to minimize her loss of the colonies by harassing them with economic warfare. France, the nation's troublesome ally, kept the United States moored to an alliance designed to sustain French power in North America. And Spain, perceptively suspicious of the hemispheric ambitions of the British, French and Americans, strove to undermine the Republic's authority in the lower Mississippi Valley.

The machinations of these three powers kept the Revolutionary generation of American diplomats engaged in international politics for fifty years after the Declaration of Independence. Indeed, the paramount significance of foreign affairs may be illustrated by the fact that, with the singular exception of George Washington, all presidents before 1829 were seasoned diplomats. The results of American diplomacy during this era were bountiful, but they were not achieved easily. Americans endured many crises during the first

years of the Republic before the vital interests of the nation were secured.

The first diplomatic crisis to arise in the post-war period centered on Anglo-American relations. At the outset of the Republic Americans hoped to secure reciprocal navigation and trade agreements with Great Britain, thereby reviving the profitable trade patterns of the colonial era. The nation was anxious also to open its wilderness frontiers to peaceful settlement. But the British refused to accept American commercial proposals and they were unwilling to relinquish control over the vast wilderness of American territory adjacent to Canada that yielded fur-bearing profits. Conversely, in the United States there were some who refused to restore the confiscated property of expatriated Tories. And many Americans refused to pay bona fide debts to English creditors. These differences, which grew out of the Peace of Paris, compounded with others that came as a result of the war, prepared the basis for a long and disquieting imbroglio that threatened the peace between the two English-speaking nations until the consummation of Jay's Treaty in 1796. The task of resolving the differences which arose between the two nations was first assigned to John Adams, who was appointed minister to the Court of St. James in 1784.

Born in 1735 in Massachusetts, the descendant of yeoman Puritans, John Adams rose to fame during the American Revolution. Adams' father encouraged him to study for the ministry, but in a fit of independence that was to characterize him for life Adams chose a career in law. On the eve of the Revolution John Adams was a well-

seasoned attorney, enjoying a spate of success, contentedly married to his profession.

When Parliamentary intransigence forced the colonists to take up arms, the middle-aged lawyer joined the rebels and supported independence. In 1774 Adams became a member of the Continental Congress and in the following year published the Novanglus letters which vigorously upheld the rights of the Bay Colony against the oppression of the English government. Adams was impatient with the moderates in Congress who hoped for a reconciliation with the mother country, and as a result of his lucid and forceful attacks upon their position he won the respect and admiration of his colleagues. His later appointment to the committee that drafted the Declaration of Independence was a tribute to both Adams' ability and loyalty to the revolutionary cause. His competence was further recognized in 1777 when Adams was designated a "militia diplomat," the only civil honor the beleaguered Congress could bestow.

Adams' abilities were soon exposed to the international arena. In February of 1777, he was sent abroad to replace Silas Deane as one of the American diplomatic triumvirate in Paris. Thereafter, a decade of diplomatic service overseas was to be interrupted only by a brief visit to Massachusetts in 1779 to serve in its constitutional convention.

While waiting at the conference table in Paris for the British to treat with the Americans, Adams journeyed to The Hague and served as interim minister to the United Dutch Provinces. There he concluded a treaty of amity and commerce. But more important, Adams secured the

first Dutch loan, making The Hague mission probably his most successful. Then after lengthy peace negotiations with the British which ended in 1783, Adams prepared to return to his law practice and to his native state. Instead, he was appointed American minister to his former sovereign, George III.¹

Adams' mission to England was not contrived as an attempt to ameliorate the conditions which arose from the Revolution itself. The new minister was instructed to negotiate a commercial accord with the British Empire, to secure full execution of the Treaty of 1783 by the English, and to resolve differences which were not settled at Paris.

While Adams was in London the major concerns of the United States were commerce and the British garrisons on the American frontier. The need to restore the flow of Anglo-American trade, paralyzed for nearly ten years by war, was necessary for the nation to thrive. It was imperative also that the Americans enjoy a strife-free frontier adjacent to Canada in order for the country to subsist.

Adams faced a formidable task in attempting to restore Anglo-American trade favorable to the United States, though at one time during the peace negotiations of 1782-1783 it appeared that Great Britain would adopt a conciliatory commercial policy towards the new nation as a counter-balance to the Franco-American alliance. By the time Adams arrived in London in 1784, however, the cry of the English

¹Worthington C. Ford, "Adams, John," Dictionary of American Biography, I, 72 - 82 ; Page Smith, John Adams, 2 vols. (New York, 1963), hereafter cited as Smith, John Adams; Gilbert Chinard, Honest John Adams (Boston, 1933), hereafter cited as Chinard, Honest John Adams.

mercantile community for protection from competitive goods was written into law. The United States was not in the Empire, and the English Navigation Acts, the cornerstone of mercantilism, barred much American produce and manufacturers and all American ships from imperial ports. To be sure, some American goods, principally raw materials and food-stuffs, were finding markets in British ports, but they were being transported in English ships, manned by English crews, and burdened with heavy import duties. The envoys' task was to open the ports to American trade carried in ships owned and operated by Americans and to seek most favored nation customs duties. Renewing normal commercial relations between the two countries hinged upon several factors which Adams focused upon in a draft treaty which the American minister presented to Lord Carmarthen, the British Foreign Secretary, on July 29, 1785. Adams' proposals called for "the most perfect equality and reciprocity." He recommended that citizens in either country were to be permitted to reside and pay duties in the other if they were nationals. They were to be free to send any kind of goods, wherever produced or manufactured, in ships of any size and any class of crew, to all points in one another's territories subject only to the right of either nation to prohibit (for reasons of State) specified imports and exports. And each country was to guarantee the other customs levies based upon most favored nation treatment.²

²Sir A. W. Ward and G. P. Gooch, The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy, 1783-1919, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1939), I, 151-152, hereafter cited as Ward and Gooch, History of British Foreign Policy; "Views of John Adams Relative to American Relations with Great Britain," in Ruhl J. Bartlett, The Record of American Diplomacy, 3rd ed. (New York, 1959) pp. 50-51, hereafter cited as Bartlett, American Diplomacy.

Adams' draft also called for a variety of other provisions. In time of war between either country and a third nation, the American envoy suggested that the principles of "free ships, free goods" and "enemy ships and enemy goods" be recognized; that contraband of war, if found on the vessels of one of the contracting parties, not be confiscated but deposited in a port of the captor and paid for; that no embargo be placed on the shipping of the nation not engaged in the war, and that the citizens of neither country be permitted to take letters of marque from a third nation and prey upon the commerce of the other contracting power.³

The minister's treaty draft fell upon deaf ears in Downing Street and at Whitehall. The British merchants, Carmarthen, and the King were unwilling to grant any tangible concessions to the Americans. Moreover, Adams' position was somewhat undermined by the fact that many administrative relaxations of the Navigation Acts provided a sizeable degree of Anglo-American trade from which some Americans were benefiting. Besides, various informal devices were employed by both the British and the Americans to circumvent the restrictions of the English government's commercial policy. In the West Indies, for instance, traders of both countries often used the joint ownership of ships to accomodate the American desire for the carrying trade and to satisfy the West Indian need for cheap food stuffs and naval stores. On the northern frontier, a host of rural regulations unfettered trade between the United States and the Canadian provinces

³Ward and Gooch, History of British Foreign Policy, I, 151.

with unofficial sanction. Nothing in Adams' correspondence indicates whether or not he was cognizant of the extent of informal trade between Americans and Englishmen in the New World.⁴

The envoy's principal concern was the need for more equitable commercial arrangements between the United States and Great Britain. Adams insisted that Americans permitted the British to carry goods in English ships into the Republic's ports without punitive restriction. Adams' position, as a diplomat, did not reflect precisely the existing commercial practices of the Americans. Each of the States in the Confederation resorted to economic reprisals against English ships and goods in the hope of breaking down trade barriers. Such attempts usually proved futile since the demand for British manufactured goods persisted. Moreover, Britain's need for raw materials was exceeded only by the American willingness to furnish them, despite the inequities of the Navigation Acts. Furthermore, the States were engaged in commercial warfare among themselves, which was a factor advantageous to England.

In spite of the difficulties presented by the presence of the Canadian and West Indian trade, and the inability of the States to hinder the existing pattern of commerce, Adams persisted in his efforts to seek a solution to what he perceived as the existence of

⁴A. L. Burt, The United States, Great Britain, and British North America (New Haven, 1940), pp. 57-59, hereafter cited as Burt, United States and British North America; S. E. Morison, The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783-1860 (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 31-32.

"commercial hostilities."⁵ These hostilities, he believed, were contrived by the British to drive American ships from the seas and to encourage continued American dependence upon the English merchant and manufacturer. Infuriated by the fact that the British could enjoy the benefits of the American trade without extending any binding commercial concessions in exchange, the envoy called upon the Confederation Congress for positive action to prevent a continuation of the status quo.⁶

Adams reported that Britain was jealous of American commercial power and frightened by the prospect of an American navy. He concluded that the only way the United States could expect favorable treatment from the British would be to enact navigation laws prohibiting American trade with England and to build a fleet of ships to enforce them. Congress was powerless to enact trade legislation and the States would not furnish funds for a navy. Furthermore, the consistent commercial strife among themselves and the British precluded any joint action being taken. By September, 1785, only three months after his arrival in London, Adams abandoned the commercial treaty proposition, disgusted both with his countrymen and the English. Having reached such an early impasse on the trade subject, the American envoy proceeded to concentrate on the western posts garrisoned by British regulars.

⁵John Adams to John Jay, London, August 6, 1785, in Ruhl J. Bartlett, The Record of American Diplomacy, 3rd ed. (New York, 1959), pp. 50-51, hereafter cited as Bartlett, American Diplomacy.

⁶Ibid.

The existence of English troops on American soil after the Peace of 1783 was probably more painful to the fledgling republic than the inequities of Anglo-American commerce, for the presence of the soldiers revealed, in fine, the strength of imperial Britain and the weakness of republican America. This facet of the post-war situation was initiated by the British before the Treaty of Paris became effective. The British government ordered the Canadian Governor-General, Guy Carleton, Lord Dorchester, to hold certain posts on the American-Canadian frontier on the day before George III proclaimed English ratification of the peace treaty. By doing this, the British government was in a position to insure that the United States fulfilled their obligations under the treaty.⁷

Specifically, the English planned to hold the posts until American debtors paid their English creditors for debts contracted before the Revolution. By the fourth, fifth, and sixth articles of the Treaty, no impediments were to be placed in the way of debt recovery by British subjects. The States were to be recommended to repeal their Confiscation Acts directed at land-holding Loyalists who crossed the British lines during the war. Furthermore, the Treaty forbade any further confiscations.

The problem was complicated by the fact that the English merchants insisted that interest be paid on the debts from the time they

⁷Samuel F. Bemis, Jay's Treaty: A Study in Commerce and Diplomacy (New York, 1923), pp. 109-133, hereafter cited as Bemis, Jay's Treaty; A. C. McLaughlin, "The Western Posts and the British Debts," American Historical Association Report for 1894, pp. 416-417.

were contracted. Unfortunately, in many instances the States disregarded the recommendations of the Treaty altogether. They continued to sequester debts, harass Loyalists attempting to recover their property, and used the rule of escheat liberally to alienate real property from its rightful, but un-American owners.

Adams was mindful of the furor created in England over the American disregard for debts, and he did not favor his countrymen's confiscatory actions. Yet, Adams persisted in claiming before his adversary in Downing Street that the abandonment of the forts by the British would encourage the Americans to pay their just debts. Furthermore, the envoy insisted that the demand for interest on the debts was unreasonable since the social upheaval resulting from the Revolution cancelled all contracts. Adams also stressed the need for extension of the time for payment.⁸

Beyond the official position of the British government on the western posts question, however, was an imperial policy to insure that the American-Canadian frontier was dominated by the English in order to protect vital economic interests of the Hudson Bay Company, a fur-trading dominion in the eastern Canadian regions adjacent to American soil. Here was a vast wilderness, inhabited principally by Indians, which yielded the Company a highly profitable supply of animal furs for export to European nations. The British, anxious to maintain their position on the frontier and keep the friendship of the Indians, even furnished the Indians with supplies from the

⁸Smith, John Adams, II, 650.

disputed garrisons. The American position on the frontier was weakened by the fact that the Indians refused to recognize the sovereignty of the United States, the States' militia organizations were unable to suppress Indian attacks on American settlements, and the Confederation Congress possessed neither the funds nor the authority to wage a campaign against the Indians. As a result, the frontier seethed with continuous strife throughout the Confederation era. If Adams was cognizant of Britain's imperial policy, he did not record it for posterity. One historian asserts, though, that the British hoped to create a neutral barrier of Indian States within American territory in order to keep the Republic weak, to protect the fur trade, and to sustain the support of the Indians; and that the policy was not abandoned by the British government until after the War of 1812.⁹

Adams, while continuing to raise the question of the posts, devoted less attention to them after Lord Carmarthen flatly informed the American envoy, in the spring of 1785, that the British would not surrender the posts until the debts were paid. As a result, Adams turned to other matters. He sought indemnification for exportation of Negro slaves and other property from New York by the British after the Armistice, contrary to the seventh article of the peace treaty. Adams also sought to recover prize ships captured by English vessels after the end of hostilities in 1783. But Adams raised these issues in vain. The British sought refuge from the American minister's demands for solutions to them behind the curtain of debt payments.

⁹Bemis, Jay's Treaty, Chapter vi.

In short, as Adams perceived it, the whole British Empire was stifling accomodation with the United States until the debts were paid.

The envoy, despairing any fruitful negotiation, advised John Jay, the Confederation's Foreign Affairs Secretary: "My advice is . . . that every state law which concerns either debts or loyalists, which can be impartially construed as contrary to the spirit of the treaty of peace, be immediately repealed and the debtors left to settle with their creditors or dispute the point of interest at law."¹⁰ Adams' counsel did not sway, however, the Confederation Congress to initiate any American attempt to resolve the crisis.

At last, seeing the Anglo-American imbroglio beyond his power to resolve, Adams requested recall. And while anticipating his return to the New World after nearly a decade of diplomacy in the Old, Adams contemplated retirement to his "little turnip yard and never quit it again."¹¹ He was disgusted with the maelstrom of European diplomacy and chagrined by his failure to secure a commercial treaty with the British. He longed to farm the rocky soil of his native Massachusetts and badly needed to free himself from debt. But despite momentary despair John Adams eagerly looked forward to a responsible role in the federal government being erected in his homeland, because

¹⁰John Adams to John Jay, May 25, 1786, in C. F. Adams, The Works of John Adams, 10 vols. (Boston, 1856), VIII, 394-396, hereafter cited as Adams, Works of John Adams.

¹¹John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, October 9, 1787, London, in Lester J. Cappon, ed., The Adams-Jefferson Letters, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1959), I, 202, hereafter cited as Cappon, Adams-Jefferson Letters (Capitalization modernized in this thesis).

Adams hoped that the new central government would be able to settle satisfactorily the disputes which divided the Anglo-American community in 1787.

Leaving London in the spring of 1788 with virtually no diplomatic fruits to carry home was a stunning blow to Adams. The results of Adams' mission were in sharp contrast to those victories at The Hague in 1781 and at Paris in 1783. But in all fairness to Adams, probably no American envoy could have succeeded during the Confederation era. The American states were divided, impotent and allied with France. Moreover, while the Americans needed accommodation with the British in the immediate post-war period, the British were disinterested in rapprochement. England's paramount interests outside the Empire were lodged in Europe--a Europe which in 1787 was poised for war.¹² Not until hostilities broke out on the Continent in 1792 did the English invite any serious attempts to resolve the stalemate.

¹²Ibid., 203.

CHAPTER II: THE ANGLO-AMERICAN IMBROGLIO

CHAPTER II

THE ANGLO-AMERICAN IMBROGLIO

Fifty-three years old in 1788, Adams withdrew from the diplomatic scene of Europe never again to return. His departure from English shores in that year was a signal event not only in the life of the diplomat, but in the history of the United States as well. The American states were at the threshold of union under a new constitution, creating a central government that was to survive the flames of European conflict for a generation.

The establishment of a federal system with a resulting national government was to Adams the remedy needed to redress the trans-Atlantic grievances of the Americans. The seasoned diplomat, however, was somewhat displeased by the treaty-making power outlined in the constitution. He lamented the fact that the Senate was to play a role in the nation's foreign relations. Adams advocated giving the President absolute power in this field.¹ His own experience with the weaknesses of the Confederation's scheme of directing foreign affairs by committee convinced Adams that it was folly for the country to depend upon the temper and judgment of any group untutored in the

¹John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, November 15, 1813, in Cappon, Adams-Jefferson Letters, II, 400 ; see also "Three Letters to Roger Sherman on the Constitution of the United States," in Adams, Works of John Adams, VI, 427-436.

subtle arts of diplomacy. Aside from this specific criticism, Adams admired the handiwork of the Philadelphia Convention, if for no other reason than it reflected on paper the political architecture Adams advocated in his Defense of the Constitutions of the United States of America, a three-volumed history of republics which Adams wrote while in London as minister. Moreover, the former diplomat expected to serve under the new government.

Within the framework of the Constitution, the vice-presidency was the post Adams eagerly sought. Though he considered himself worthy of the chief magistracy, Adams was mindful of the fact that George Washington of Virginia was destined to be the first President. Therefore, it was to the first elections under the federal government that Adams devoted his attention during the autumn and winter of 1788. The campaign which ensued was a significant prelude to the intensification of party spirit which was to dominate American diplomatic intercourse with the British during Washington's administrations.

Adams faced a formidable task when he presented himself as a candidate for the second office by spurning a Senate seat in the new upper chamber and by declining the presidency of the moribund Confederation Congress.² There were presidential candidates in nearly every State. Moreover, despite the fact that Adams was readily respected for his services to the nation during and after the Revolution he was not a popular figure after he returned from the Old

²Chinard, Honest John Adams, p. 222; John Adams to Theophilous Parsons, Braintree, November 2, 1788, in Adams, Works of John Adams, VIII, 484.

World. His three-volumed magnum opus, which was read by many of his contemporaries, revealed an enigmatic political philosophy that was widely misconstrued as un-republican. Adams was short, rotund and he wore curled hair in an era when true republicans had shorn their locks.³ He was personally cold, often rude and disinterested in idle conversation. In short, John Adams was not an inspiring figure to people who gaped in awe before the grave and taciturn Washington.

To what extent his physical characteristics and political ideas affected the election in 1788 is not readily discernible, yet Adams often noted that he did not possess an attractive image.⁴ But it was in the political arena, exposed publicly to the vicissitudes of backbiting and acrimony, when Adams despaired. Adams was a novice to politics. He was extremely sensitive to criticism and he seldom restrained from replying to his critics in language devoid of tact. Adams was accused of harboring monarchial and aristocratic tendencies, he was censured for failing to negotiate a commercial accord with Great Britain, and he was vilified for not giving his unqualified endorsement of the new Constitution. But the active center of opposition to Adams' candidacy was in the hands of a persistent enemy.

In New York a group of bankers and brokers, under the leadership

³John Adams to Benjamin Rush, December 11, 1811, in Adams, Works of John Adams, X, 11.

⁴See in particular John Adams to Abigail Adams, March 1, 1796, Philadelphia, in The Adams Papers, "Letters Received and other Loose Papers," Massachusetts Historical Society, microfilm edition, 608 reels, ed. by L. H. Butterfield (Boston, 1954-1959), hereafter cited as Adams Papers (Capitalization modernized by the author of this thesis).

of Alexander Hamilton, was attempting to gather support to place a pliable figure in the vice-presidency. Hamilton, a brilliant lawyer, was an astute politician who formerly served as Washington's aide-de-camp. Hamilton feared the potential influence that Adams might have in the new government. Assured by Henry Knox, Hamilton's emissary in New England, that Adams enjoyed considerable local support north of New York the shrewd attorney lent aid to Adams' candidacy during the election of the presidential electors, then strove to reduce the number of votes cast for Adams by encouraging the electors to spread their ballots over the field of vice-presidential aspirants. The upshot of this chicanery resulted in Adams' election by only a plurality.⁵

Adams never understood Hamilton's motives for waging a spirited campaign against the former diplomat's candidacy, though he perceived his adversary's efforts as "damnable malice."⁶ And characteristic of Adams' sensitivity to the opposition and criticism which accompanied his election, the first vice-president angrily cried that he would resign the office except that by doing so he might endanger the whole fabric of the new government. Apparently Hamilton was satisfied that Adams was chastised by the outcome of the election.

If Adams expected the vice-presidency to place him in a position

⁵Manning J. Dauer, The Adams Federalists (Boston, 1953), p. 83, hereafter cited as Dauer, The Adams Federalists; Joseph Charles, The Origins of the American Party System (Williamsburg, 1956), pp. 56-57, hereafter cited as Charles, Origins of the American Party System.

⁶Quoted in ibid., p. 56.

of great responsibility, he was sadly mistaken. By a fate which Adams could not anticipate in 1788 the second office of the land became an honorific benefice which soon earned the immortal epitaph from its first incumbent: "My country, has in its wisdom, contrived for me the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived."⁷ Relegating Adams to an obscure corner in the Federal area was largely the result of Hamiltonian handiwork and Washingtonian quiescence. Hamilton purposely fought to reduce Adams' influence in the new government during the election,⁸ and Washington, prone to literal interpretations of the Constitution, saw only two powers enumerated for the vice-presidency--as speaker of the Senate and as a successor to a dead President. Adams felt entitled to membership in a policy-formulating body such as the Cabinet. Instead, he was given a commissionership on Hamilton's Sinking Fund; a cruel blow to a man whose knowledge of foreign affairs was legion, but whose interest in public finance was negligible.

The elections of 1788, in which Adams was so deeply involved, were staged against a backdrop of European events that were soon to envelop the American scene. And as Adams entered upon the duties of his new post in the spring of 1789, the eyes of America were focused upon the disintegration of the ancien régime in France.

The internal strife which engulfed France in 1789 was warmly

⁷John Adams to Abigail Adams, December 19, 1793, Adams Papers.

⁸Charles, Origins of the American Party System, p. 57.

received by most Americans. But the vice-president predicted that the French were incapable of creating democratic institutions overnight to be perpetuated forever. Adams correctly assessed the path of the French Revolution. As he predicted the National Convention usurped the political power of the French state, an act which eventually led to the indiscriminate execution of nobles and the tyrannical rule of King Mob.⁹

In 1790, while France was undergoing the vicissitudes of revolution, President Washington sent Gouverneur Morris, a wealthy businessman, to London as unofficial successor to Adams. The vice-president's replacement was much better armed than Adams. The Federal Constitution gave the central government sovereign power in treating with foreign nations, a weapon which Adams needed, but did not have, when he was minister.

Morris impressed upon Lord Carmarthen (now the Duke of Leeds) the authority of Congress in all matters concerning foreign commerce. He assured Leeds also that the United States would uphold its obligations under the peace treaty, by pointing out that Congress was already repealing all laws contrary to the Treaty. Moreover, Morris explained the absolute inability of the federal government to insure that every debt was collectible since many of them were unrecoverable. Leeds replied that the British would not withdraw from the disputed garrisons until the position was regularized. He suggested fair compensation. When Morris broached the subject of a commercial treaty

⁹John Adams to Abigail Adams, December 19, 1793; Adams Papers.

Leeds was attentive and interested but failed to offer a definite proposal. Morris' warm reception by the English government and Leeds' interest in negotiations was the result of what the British thought to be the apparent Congressional desire to resolve the issues which plagued the Adams mission.¹⁰ The Federal Constitution ended most of the commercial warfare among the States and American businessmen were anxious to benefit as much as possible from Anglo-American commerce.

In sharp contrast to the failure of Adams, Morris' mission produced one concession from the British government. In March, 1791, the Committee of the Council on Trade submitted a report recommending commercial negotiations with the Americans, though it recognized that the United States stood to lose more in a trade war than Great Britain.¹¹

While Morris was in London, England and Spain became embroiled over a trading area in the Nootka Sound in the Pacific Northwest. The Nootka Sound controversy alarmed the American government, because it was believed in Philadelphia that if an Anglo-Spanish war ensued, the British might attempt to move troops over American soil to spearhead an attack upon Spanish-held Louisiana.

In deference to Adams' previous official contacts with the English he was asked by Washington to express his opinion as to what courses of action should be taken by the United States in the event the British attempted to use American soil as a base for military

¹⁰Ward and Gooch, History of British Foreign Policy, I, 154.

¹¹Ibid., 155.

operations. It was Adams' viewpoint that the Americans should not permit English troops to cross the Republic's soil. But in the event that Britain violated American soil, the Vice-President suggested that the United States not become involved in hostilities. In the first place Adams did not believe there would be any sizeable public support for war. Secondly, the government neither possessed the strength to command men nor the money to prosecute a war unless the necessity of it was agreed to by all. The Vice-President advised, instead, that if British troops passed through American territory the United States should remonstrate in London. Adams' advice was probably based on his desire to see the British commit themselves to a gross violation of the nation's sovereignty in the hope that as a result the English would be compelled to redress other grievances of the United States in order to satisfy the loss of American honor.¹² Whether or not Adams' position was practicable was sidetracked by the fact that the crisis passed before any action was needed on the part of the American government.

As the Nootka Sound crisis passed into history, Adams' attention was focused upon an attempt in Congress to discriminate against British goods. England's commercial discrimination against American shipping and goods became a paramount issue in Congress because the Revolutionary government in France was granting trade concessions to the United States. Thomas Jefferson, the Secretary of State, reported

¹² John Adams to George Washington, August 29, 1790, in Adams, Works of John Adams, VIII, 497.

to Congress in 1791 that about sixty-one per cent of American whale oil was being sold in France. Virtually none was being exported to Great Britain. Moreover, the French opened their ports in the West Indies and were importing two-thirds of New England's codfish production. Jefferson suggested that Congress grant preferential duties to French imports. In the House of Representatives, James Madison of Virginia, while advocating most favored treatment for the French, called for higher duties against English goods and ships. It was Madison's plan to discriminate against British shipping in the hope of forcing England to grant reciprocal trading privileges to Americans. The Hamiltonians in Congress, though anxious to secure a greater share of the French trade, were not anxious to stop the existing flow of Anglo-American commerce. Their position was anchored to the fact that the English trade comprised eighty per cent of all American trade, and that the duties collected from British ships and goods were needed to support the national fiscal program. The stability of the federal government was tied to this revenue. Madison was not attacking the English trade, but the absence of reciprocity in the oceanic commerce.

Adams was opposed to Madison's position. The Vice-President supported Hamilton's fiscal program and he saw in the Virginian's plan the possibility that it might not work. Adams was mindful of the fact that the British, while anxious to trade with the United States, would lose less in a trade war than the Americans. Moreover, the Vice-President realized that American merchants were dependent

on a supply of English credit.¹³ Madison's proposals, however, aroused English interest in possible American discrimination against British goods and ships. As a result Great Britain sent George Hammond, a career diplomat, to the United States in the autumn of 1791 to negotiate not only the questions which were never resolved by Adams in London but a commercial treaty as well. Madison dropped his proposals when the news of Hammond's appointment reached American shores.

The English envoy brought with him instructions to settle the question of the frontier posts and to resolve the debt claims of the British merchants. If the American government was anxious to proceed with commercial negotiations, Hammond was to secure most favored nation treatment for English goods and ships. And if possible the envoy was to secure a promise that existing duties on imports from England would not be raised. Similar treatment was to be offered to American goods and vessels in exchange. Yet, Hammond was not to concede any American demand for trade into colonial ports, including the West Indies.¹⁴

Hammond was welcomed by the new government, and became intimately acquainted with Alexander Hamilton, who was serving as Washington's Secretary of the Treasury. The envoy soon learned that Hamilton was interested in seeing the British government grant Americans the

¹³Dauer, The Adams Federalists, p. 83.

¹⁴Bernard Mayo, ed., Instructions to British Ministers to the United States, 1791-1812 (Washington, 1941), pp. 5-8, hereafter cited as Mayo, Instructions to British Ministers.

right to trade in the West Indies, if only in small craft.¹⁵ Aside from informal and unofficial dealings with Hamilton, no commercial negotiations were undertaken in 1792 because Hammond's time was devoted to the interminable questions of debts and compensation, alleged failures of the States to accept the Peace Treaty as the law of the land, and the garrisons on American territory.

Throughout 1792 and part of 1793 Hammond negotiated with Thomas Jefferson, the Secretary of State. Jefferson's position on the question of the debts and frontier posts was not unlike the stand which Adams took during the Vice-President's London mission.¹⁶ Consequently, Hammond reiterated the Carmarthen policy.¹⁷ Jefferson's principal aim was to encourage the British to surrender the forts. He pointed out that English fears regarding debt collection were largely groundless. British subjects were free to use American courts to recover their debts, and that both Congress and the Federal courts were demonstrating good faith by invalidating confiscation acts and unholding debt claims.

Apart from his official dealings with Jefferson the English envoy conferred with Hamilton on an informal basis. There is no evidence to indicate that Hamilton sought to subvert Jefferson's position, but it was apparent from Hammond's dispatches that Hamilton eagerly

¹⁵Ward and Gooch, History of British Foreign Policy, I, 155.

¹⁶Thomas Jefferson to George Hammond, Philadelphia, May 29, 1792, in Bartlett, American Diplomacy, pp. 68-73.

¹⁷Hammond to Jefferson, March 5, 1792, in ibid., pp. 66-68.

sought commercial arrangements which would permit some American trade in the British West Indies. Hamilton and Hammond were intimates and the envoy was often made privy to Cabinet discussions. In this matter, Hamilton's actions were improper and paved the way, in part, for Jefferson's retirement from office in 1793. Since no action was undertaken by either Hammond or Jefferson to draft a commercial treaty in 1792, their discussions remained centered on the other grievances which paralyzed Adams' mission six years before. But both men were strapped to their viewpoints and the imbroglio remained unresolved. On the other hand, the French were granting additional commercial concessions to Americans daily.

Throughout 1792 France was purchasing vast amounts of food stuffs and naval stores from Americans, using credits in exchange on debts to the French government from the days of the American Revolution. Furthermore, the miniscule French merchant marine was incapable of handling the trade, and as a result Americans were granted the carriage of almost all French West Indian produce. The upshot of the increased commerce with France and the Indies was the first economic boom in a generation. From this point until the War of 1812 the economic development of the nation was tied to international trade and shipping.¹⁸

The revival in oceanic commerce between America and Europe (which had been the keystone to the colonial economy) was welcomed

¹⁸D. C. North, The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860 (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1959), p. 46.

by Adams, but he was alarmed by the increasing division among Americans over the path of the French Revolution. Political labels were gaining considerable favor. The two major political factions--those who favored and those who opposed the Federal Constitution in 1787 and 1788--which existed in the later years of the Confederation were melting into oblivion. In their place two new groups were congealing. One faction, calling themselves Federalists, was dominated by the mercantile community on the Atlantic seaboard. Hamilton assumed nominal leadership of this group.¹⁹ This faction was alarmed by the excesses of the French Revolution and it roundly condemned the wholesale execution of the aristocracy in France. Opposing this faction was a group which took the labels of Republican and Democratic-Republican. The Republican faction was nearly without leadership, though James Madison was often recognized as its spokesman in the House. This party considered the Revolution in France a holy cause for liberty and it believed the United States should support the Republican successors of Louis XVI. The events in France, though, only magnified the presence of party spirit which was first manifested in Adams' campaign for the vice-presidency. The Republicans chafed under a government dominated by Hamilton. They were opposed to the Hamiltonian fiscal scheme, which appeared to Republicans as a device to enrich the wealthy. They were aggravated by the inability of the government to wring commercial concessions from the British, and they were enraged

¹⁹Charles, Origins of the American Party System, pp. 7-36.

by the failure of the government to eject British troops from American soil.²⁰

Adams was opposed to party divisions, and he saw in them the seeds of dissension and tyranny. He insisted that many Americans were erroneously comparing the principles of the French Revolution with those of the American. And in a series of articles which he entitled "Discourses on Davila" the Vice-President reminded his fellow citizens that the French were doomed unless their government was based on political equilibrium that permitted all classes to be represented. Adams insisted that the United States would remain politically secure only if it continued to maintain the proper balance between the three branches of government and the two houses of Congress.²¹

Adams' "Discourses," published in 1791 in a Republican newspaper, were injurious to him. Though the Vice-President did not consider himself a party man, he was associated with Hamilton's faction since Adams favored a strong government and supported the existing fiscal policies. The Hamiltonian Federalists disclaimed Adams because they saw in his "Discourses" a peripheral attack upon the Constitution.²²

²⁰See Marcus Cunliffe, The Nation Takes Shape: 1789-1837 (Chicago, 1959), pp. 27-28, for a succinct analysis of the checkered career of party labels in the Federalist era. See Charles, Origins of the American Party System, Chapters i and ii for a convincing argument as to the seeds of partisan strife before Jay's Treaty.

²¹"Discourses on Davila," in Adams, Works of John Adams, VI, 232.

²²Charles, Origins of the American Party System, p. 70.

The Republicans scourged the Vice-President for his attack upon the French Revolution.

The Vice-President was shocked by his readers' misinterpretation of the "Discourses" message. He brooded over the failure of his countrymen to appreciate his valuable services to the American Revolution and he lamented the fact that he was confined to that apex of ennui--the second office--which promised so much and produced so little.²³ Nonetheless, in 1792 Adams was re-elected to the vice-presidency, and this time by a comfortable majority. Hamilton's faction supported Adams in 1792 to keep George Clinton, a staunch Republican from New York, from being elected.²⁴

John Adams entered the second term of his vice-presidency shortly after the outbreak of the Franco-British war in 1793. The legacy of the unresolved Anglo-American imbroglio remained, now to be augmented with the problems of neutrality, contraband, and sea power --problems which Adams attempted to mitigate in his draft treaty while he was in England. Moreover, the war between the great powers was brought into sharp focus in the United States because in France the war came in the wake of the execution of America's benefactor, Louis XVI, and the proclamation of the French Republic.

While Adams wished that his fellow Americans could remain neutral and profit from the sale of food stuffs and naval stores to

²³Smith, John Adams, II, 802.

²⁴Charles, Origins of the American Party System, p. 57.

the warring powers,²⁵ he realized that American neutrality would be "a very difficult thing to maintain."²⁶ He knew that the British navy would strangle American shipping to France in the hope of starving the "armed nation." Furthermore, the Vice-President was certain that the English would attempt to conquer the French islands in the Caribbean, and send American ships back to their home ports.²⁷ It was even conceivable that the United States might be allied with the French in a war with the English. Indeed, it was felt in London that American sympathy was overwhelmingly on the French side and it was known that the United States was bound by a defensive treaty to protect French possessions in the Caribbean. The initial move taken by the French government, after the war declaration, was intended to sway the United States away from economic dependence upon Britain. In January, 1793, the National Convention opened all ports in the Indies to American ships and goods. And in order to secure continued good will, the French sent a brilliant and enthusiastic young envoy, Edmond Genêt, to represent the Republic in Philadelphia.

The impending arrival of Genêt in the United States presented a delicate problem involving the Franco-American alliance and the reception of the new envoy. Hamilton and Jefferson, while both agreeing that neutrality was the only practicable course of action open to

²⁵John C. Miller, The Federalist Era: 1789-1801 (New York, 1960), p. 140, hereafter cited as Miller, Federalist Era.

²⁶John Adams to Abigail Adams, February 27, 1793, Adams Papers.

²⁷Ibid.

the United States, differed on the question of which branch of government--the executive or the legislative--possessed the power to declare neutrality. Hamilton contended that the President was responsible, Jefferson asserted that the power was Congress' alone. The Treasury Secretary also desired to see the French treaty of 1778 suspended until a de facto government, not fighting for its existence, was supreme in France. On the other hand, the Secretary of State contended that treaties are contracted between powers and not governments and that the United States was bound to uphold the French accord.

As the controversy raged between Hamilton and Jefferson, Tench Coxe, a friend of both Hamilton and Adams who worked in the Treasury department, wrote the Vice-President for an opinion to substantiate Hamilton's position. Adams replied cautiously that the decision was up to the President: "I have no constitutional vote in it. I therefore protest against taking any side in it or having my name or opinion quoted about it."²⁸ The Vice-President feared offending any of the warring powers, and he was privately inclined to believe that Hamilton's position was the safest. Treaties were concluded on the basis that "both nations will remain nearly the same and the interests of both parties not essentially changed: not that one party will turn the world upside down. Any total change of interests made by the act of God or by the act of one of the parties," he continued, "will discharge the other from all moral obligations to fulfill the treaty."²⁹

²⁸John Adams to Tench Coxe, April 25, 1793, Adams Papers.

²⁹Ibid.

Adams considered the question of American neutrality a matter of expediency rather than morality. "A neutrality, absolute, total neutrality, is our only hope." Besides, Adams did not consider the revolutionary regime in France capable of holding its own against the combined forces of crowned Europe.³⁰

The Vice-President's viewpoint was not vindicated by Washington's actions. The President compromised the conflicting positions of Hamilton and Jefferson by initiating a neutrality proclamation without consulting Congress and agreed to receive officially the new French envoy who disembarked in Charleston Harbor in June, 1793.

Adams was in Quincy when Genêt^A arrived in Philadelphia in early July. And he watched the crisis which overcame the capital with detachment. Genêt^A schemed with George Rogers Clark, an alcoholic and former Revolutionary general-hero, to launch an attack on Spanish colonial possessions adjacent to the United States.³¹ He issued letters-of-marque to many idle American ship captains anxious to prey on British ships. Genêt^A established extra-territorial prize courts to confirm prize awards of English ships taken by the privateers. The envoy also founded the Democratic-Republican societies which were fueled by enthusiasm for the French Republic and membered by its most ardent supporters.. He sought an advance from Hamilton upon money due France in order to finance his grandiose military plans and he attempted

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Frederick J. Turner, ed., Correspondence of the French Ministers to the United States, 1791-1797 (Washington, 1903), pp. 216-217, 223, 232-233; Gilbert C. Din, "Colonización en la Luisiana Española en el siglo dieciocho," an unpublished doctoral dissertation (University of Madrid, 1960), Chapter i.

to borrow American cannon from Henry Knox, the Secretary of War. Hamilton denied Genêt's plea for funds and Knox informed the envoy that the United States would not loan him a pistol.³² The French minister's machination finally was stifled when Genêt was indicted by two Federalists (Rufus King and John Jay) for threatening the authority of Washington. The news of Genêt's perfidy brought in its wake the temporary downfall of the societies and an immediate request for the envoy's recall by an unanimous Cabinet. The Genêt episode ended with the arrival of his replacement, Joseph Fauchet, who bore Genêt's death warrant. A generous Washington permitted the impassioned ex-envoy to remain in the United States.

The arrival of Genêt in America coincided with the inception of British confiscation of American ships in the Caribbean. In an attempt to keep French produce and American exports from reaching the ports of France by the way of the French Indies, the British sent a fleet to the Caribbean armed with authority to stop the flow of enemy commerce. On June 8, 1793, an Order-in-Council was issued by the English government, invoking the Rule of 1756 (trade which is not open to a nation in peace cannot be opened in war) and declaring it to be Britain's right to detain neutral vessels carrying foodstuffs and naval stores to any port controlled by France. In turn, the British would purchase the cargoes from its owners. The Order-in-Council was followed by unofficial news that the English were

³²Alexander De Conde, Entangling Alliance: Politics and Diplomacy Under George Washington (Durham, N. C., 1958), p. 239.

sponsoring a truce between Portugal and Algiers, which would free the Portuguese Navy to fight with England and would leave the Algerines free to raid American shipping. As a result of the actions taken by the British, American ships in the Caribbean were confiscated by the dozens and the Mediterranean Sea was virtually closed to American vessels.

The downfall of Gen^Aet was nearly completed by the time Adams returned to Philadelphia in December, 1793. Adams noticed that the political climate had changed during the Congressional recess. The Republicans controlled the lower house and increased its numbers in the Senate. "The spirit of party is very subtle although very violent," Adams remarked.³³ He was anguished by the faction of "Anti-Federalists" who were attacking the President's neutrality policy. And he was amazed by the influence they possessed over the populace. It seemed to Adams that the government was in a critical situation and he assigned all blame to the Francophiles. "The Anti-Federalist party by their ox feasts, their civic feasts, their King-killing toasts, their perpetual insolence and billings-gate against all nations and governments in Europe, their everlasting brutal cry of tyranny, despots, and combinations against liberty, etc., etc., etc., have probably irritated, offended, and provoked all the crowned heads of Europe at last; and a little more of this indelicacy and indecency may involve us in a war with all the world."³⁴

³³John Adams to Abigail Adams, January 12, 1794, Adams Papers.

³⁴John Adams to Abigail Adams, December 22, 1793, Adams Papers.

CHAPTER III: THE CRISIS OF 1794

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THE CRISIS OF 1794

"No prospect of peace in Europe, and therefore none of internal harmony in America" was Adams' preview of 1794.¹ The incessant attacks on American shipping by the English was intensifying party spirit in the capital. The Francophiles in Congress and in the streets prated the virtues of the French wars and celebrated every victory of arms over the British. And for every spoliation of a merchant vessel by the Royal Navy, Republican political capital increased. The Federalists were stymied; they could not endorse the British and they would not embrace the French. The Federalists, Adams pointed out, were "more afraid of the friendship of France than of the enmity of England."²

Because of their refusal to embrace the French, the Federalists were being labeled by their political opponents as the pro-British party. The Federalists, in fact, remained staunch supporters of Washington's neutrality policy, and their Anglophile proclivities, if any, were far less pronounced than the "Frenchified zealots," as Adams described them.³

The Federalist position was not aided by news that the French

¹John Adams to Abigail Adams, January 9, 1794, Adams Papers.

²John Adams to Abigail Adams, March 8, 1794, Adams Papers.

³John Adams to Abigail Adams, January 12, 1794, Adams Papers.

also were attacking American ships. Despite the French depredations, the Anti-Federalist faction was vocal. Even Genét's short-lived societies were being reorganized to vilify the administration's neutrality policy. Adams roundly condemned the societies' incessant attacks on the President and the government. While he believed the clubs were legal the Vice-President censured them for attempting "to ruin [Washington's] character, destroy his peace, and injure his health."⁴

But the British and French attacks on American ships were only part of the scene in which the party spirit found fuel for its fires. In the Northwest, south of the disputed posts, Indians were attacking American settlements with disquieting daring and regularity. Moreover, General Anthony Wayne, whose paltry forces were attempting to subdue the Indians, was beset with expiring enlistments, seditious officers, and poor supplies.⁵ On the Atlantic the Algerines were capturing American ships, confiscating cargoes and imprisoning sailors, leading Madison, the Republican leader in Congress, to conclude that the British purposely encouraged the Algerines to plunder American shipping.⁶ In short, as Adams lamented, "we cannot be in a more desperate situation than we are with all Europe, with all Indians and Barbary States."⁷

⁴Ibid.

⁵Walter Lowrie and Matthew Clark, American State Papers, 6 Vols. (Washington, 1832-34), Microcord edition, Indian Affairs, I, 363, hereafter cited as Lowrie and Clark, American State Papers.

⁶Miller, Federalist Era, p. 145.

⁷John Adams to Abigail Adams, January 9, 1794, Adams Papers.

But Adams was convinced that Washington was equal to the tasks of keeping the nation free from disunion and neutral in war.⁸

The Vice-President's attention was focused at the beginning of the year on two events which appeared pregnant with political significance. First of all, Jefferson resigned from office and secondly, the Secretary of State left a valedictory on foreign commerce. Adams perceived Jefferson's departure from the government as an attempt on the part of the Virginian to allow his reputation to grow until a clamor was raised for him to succeed Washington. The Vice-President explored and condemned Jefferson's motives. ". . . He is indolent and his soul is poisoned with ambition."⁹ But Adams approved the precedent that Jefferson set because he expected to use it himself. Adams thought that Jefferson was embittered against the Constitution and the government, that his mind was "poisoned with passion, prejudice and faction."¹⁰

Unquestionably, Adams considered Jefferson his rival for the Presidency. He even envisioned a political maneuver that would frustrate Jefferson's alleged ambition. "I am almost tempted to wish he [Jefferson] may be chosen Vice-President at the next election, for there if he could do no good, he could do no harm."¹¹ And it would free the presidency for Adams if Washington departed.

⁸Ibid.

⁹John Adams to Abigail Adams, December 26, 1793, Adams Papers.

¹⁰John Adams to Abigail Adams, January 6, 1793, Adams Papers.

¹¹Ibid.

Jefferson's report on American commercial intercourse with foreign nations was looked upon by Adams and the Federalists as a partisan rebuttal to the administration's policies.¹² Reduced to resolution by Madison in the House of Representatives, the propositions were, in the main, American-styled Navigation Acts. They were tailored to discriminate against the English trade because there was no Anglo-American commercial accord, and designed to encourage more French trade since the fighting republic was granting concessions to American shipping.¹³ The purpose of Jefferson's recommendations, and Madison's resolves, was to nurse Franco-American commerce at the expense of the British. In doing so both hoped to wring concessions from England while not at the same time alienate the friendship of France.

Adams firmly denounced Madison's resolutions. The Vice-President considered it pointless to attempt to regulate oceanic trade when all powers were ravishing American ships with indiscriminate ease.¹⁴ Moreover, Adams considered Madison's resolves highly partisan and a threat to Washington's neutrality policy. The Federalists closed ranks in opposition to Madison's resolves because they were opposed to a "war of trade legislation." William Smith, a South Carolinian Federalist, fashioned his party's rebuttal from Hamilton's

¹²John Adams to John Quincy Adams, April 3, 1794, Adams Papers.

¹³Joseph Vales, comp., Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States, 1789-1824, 42 vols. (Washington, 1834-1856), III, 155-158, hereafter cited as Annals.

¹⁴John Adams to John Quincy Adams, April 3, 1794, Adams Papers.

report on manufacturers. Smith reasoned that Madison's proposals would endanger the government's stability and fiscal integrity by stifling English trade. In the end, the Federalists prevailed and Madison's commercial propositions were defeated.¹⁵

While Adams followed the debates in the House over Madison's resolves, the Vice-President's chamber was engaged in a heated fight over Albert Gallatin, a Swiss-born Republican Senator from Pennsylvania. The Federalists were attempting to unseat Gallatin because the Pennsylvanian sought to investigate Hamilton's bailiwick, the Treasury department. It was a signal event for the Federalist leadership in the Senate. Beforehand, the Hamiltonian faction limited its partisan activities to thwarting anti-Administration legislation. Now the Federalists were taking the initiative to protect Hamilton. Gallatin lost his seat, as a result of Federalist action, believing that Adams would have voted for him if there had been a tie.¹⁶ On the contrary, the Vice-President was pleased that the Federalists prevailed.¹⁷ Adams was not denouncing Gallatin, but he was condemning the Pennsylvanian's political associations.

Adams supported Washington's policies and Hamilton's fiscal program. To the Vice-President an investigation of the latter was an attack on the former. Adams was unable to perceive any benefit from

¹⁵Annals, III, 431.

¹⁶J. A. Carroll and W. W. Ashworth, George Washington: First in Peace (New York, 1957), p. 158 N., hereafter cited as Carroll and Ashworth, George Washington.

¹⁷Ibid.

impinging the Administration's course of action. This attitude of Adams was the key to the Vice-President's political bias. He considered himself above party spirit and he felt duty bound to support the administration in power.

The first tie-breaking vote Adams cast in 1794 clearly indicated his unswerving loyalty to Washington and, significantly, his support of policies now clearly identified with the Federalist party. The Vice-President broke a tie vote in February, 1794, to enact an anti-filibustering statute sponsored by the Federalists.¹⁸ The legislation developed from attempts on the part of General Clark and Edmond Genêt to mount an attack on Spanish Florida. The Spanish commissioner's complaint concerning Clark's activities, coupled with the fear that the General's Jacobin Army would precipitate a war between the United States and Spain, left Adams enraged at those who were "continually committing some intemperance of indiscretion or tending to defeat all our precautions to keep peace."¹⁹ Adams was stunned personally by Clark's treasonous association with the malcontents, but the affair only reconfirmed the Vice-President's lifelong fear and distrust of military personnel.²⁰

At the tail end of the Clark episode Adams' attention was diverted by three ominous events that brought the United States close to war with Great Britain and which presaged the extraordinary mission of

¹⁸Annals, III, 66-69.

¹⁹John Adams to John Quincy Adams, May 26, 1794, Adams Papers.

²⁰John Adams to Abigail Adams, February 9, 1794, Adams Papers.

John Jay to London to resolve the Anglo-American imbroglio. First of all, a report of Thomas Pinckney, the American minister, in London, arrived relating the unwillingness of the British government to renew negotiations over the Peace Treaty infractions by both nations. Besides, the new Foreign Secretary Baron Grenville resisted Pinckney's pleas for a bi-national mediation of the Indian crisis on the American frontier. Thirdly, in late March, Pinckney's letters revealed that nearly two hundred fifty American vessels were captured in the British West Indies, under a secret Order-in-Council issued by the English ministry in November.²¹ Finally, unofficial news was received from the frontier that the Canadian Governor-General, Lord Dorchester, while addressing a council of Indian chieftains, predicted that hostilities were about to break out between the British and the Americans. Moreover, it was believed that Dorchester invited the Indians to ally themselves with the British in order to recover lands sold to American citizens.²²

Adams queried: Did England actually intend to force the United States out of its neutral position? Were the British purposely driving

²¹Lowrie and Clark, American State Papers, Foreign Relations, I, 315, 328, 429. On November 6, 1793, the Privy Council issued the secret Order-in-Council which authorized British ships-of-war to seize and condemn all neutral ships carrying provisions to the French Indies. To ensure that the bag of American ships would be as large as possible, the order was kept secret from Pinckney until late December. Of the total captured 150 were detained by the British. See Mayo, Instructions to British Ministers, pp. 48-49.

²²Bemis, Jay's Treaty, p. 176; Mayo, Instructions to British Ministers, pp. 74-75N. Dorchester spoke at Quebec and he did not expect his speech to be publicized. Many Canadians assumed that war between the United States and Great Britain was imminent.

the Americans into the French orbit?²³ The Vice-President was understandably alarmed. While he recorded no reactions to Grenville's reluctance to continue negotiations with Pinckney, Adams must have been dismayed because the necessity for an immediate settlement of Anglo-American differences appeared to be the only course open to both sides that would prevent a rupture. And as a result of England's unprecedented and unheralded attack on American shipping in the Caribbean under the November Order-in-Council, Adams believed that it was only a matter of time before the British conquered all the French Indies and in doing so invited war by virtually halting American commerce with the French colonies, bringing an end to all American trade so vitally important to the Republic's economy.²⁴ Possibly, Dorchester revealed, in his public address to the Indians, a forthcoming declaration of war from London. The strength of Dorchester's contingent in Canada was not known in the United States. Actually, the Governor-General commanded six thousand regulars. With the support of the Indians, the Canadians possessed a formidable task force.²⁵

To Adams war was unthinkable. "The havoc made in our trade will distress us," yet the nation must not go to war because "nothing is to be dreaded so much as that."²⁶ A war would bring an end to the

²³John Adams to Adrian Van Der Kamp, February 18, 1794, in Carroll and Ashworth, George Washington, 157N. No copy of this letter in the Adams Papers.

²⁴John Adams to Abigail Adams, February 8, 1794, Adams Papers.

²⁵Miller, Federalist Era, pp. 145-146.

²⁶John Adams to Abigail Adams, February 8, 1794, Adams Papers.

Constitution and possibly to the United States as well. Twenty years of revolution and diplomacy to free Americans from the British Empire and to establish an enlightened republic would face the fate of a partitioned Poland if an unsuccessful war was waged against an England that was mistress of the seas and master on the frontier.

As a result of the three-pronged menace to American interests --intransigence in Whitehall, depredations at sea and imminent war on the frontier--the Federalists marshalled their forces in Congress to sponsor vigorous defense legislation. In the House, the Federalists proposed a naval construction bill authorizing the creation of a six frigate navy to suppress the Algerines. Predictably the Republicans, who were eager to legislate economic coercion, were not anxious to support any of the measures put forth by their political opponents. Indicative of Republican opposition to this measure was Madison's quixotic rebuttal that the United States could hire the Portuguese navy to defend American shipping after the peace lapsed between Portugal and Algiers.²⁷ President Washington, on the advice of Hamilton, called for raising and equipping an army of thirty thousand men and the construction of fortifications sufficiently strong to resist anything short of a seige. To these suggestions the Republicans remained silent in order to avoid attacking the President and to keep from being labeled as pacifists. Instead, the Republicans spearheaded an investigation of the Treasury in the wake of Gallatin's earlier defeat, thereby revealing their complete contempt for the

²⁷Annals, III, 250; Smith, John Adams, II, 858.

Federalist proposals.²⁸

At this point Adams read Edmund Randolph's (Jefferson's successor in the State Department) comprehensive report accounting for spoliations against American shipping by the European belligerents and the Algerines. Randolph revealed that the number of depredations attributed to the British far exceeded those ascribed to the French.²⁹ Adams sensed a decidedly alarming increase in the war fever after Randolph's report was published, but the Vice-President was "determined to do all that may depend on me to keep war off as long as possible."³⁰

Ten days after Randolph sent his message to Congress, the Federalists' defense policy reached fruition as Republicans joined them in authorizing the naval bill, a harbor fortification act and approving a large army appropriation. Their willingness to support Federalist defense measures reflected the muse of bi-partisanship that would be revived again in the Republic's history. Adams considered the legislation necessary, though he lamented the unenviable cost--an eternal debt, and the probable result--a disastrous war.³¹ He pointed out to his wife that "all the men and most of the money" would come from the New England States if war ensued, lamenting the said fact that even if the Americans were victorious, "others will throw

²⁸Ibid., 463-465, 470-474.

²⁹Ibid., 423-444.

³⁰John Adams to Abigail Adams, March 13, 1794, Adams Papers.

³¹Ibid.

off the burden of British debts and obtain the advantages of [the] fur and peltry trade and western lands, [while New England has] not the smallest thing to hope for."³²

Adams agreed that "Britain has done much amiss and deserves all that will fall thereon,"³³ but the war fever which was scourging the nation was due principally to the Republicans whose ranks were heavily peppered with debt-burdened Southerners anxious to avoid paying their English creditors, land hungry speculators poised to grab western territory under Indian control, and fur traders greedily waiting for the British to lose the vast fur-bearing wilderness. Adams was also skeptical of the Federalists' appeals for public support of the defense measures. "They are seeking popularity and loaves and fishes as well as the Antis . . . ," Adams remarked wryly.³⁴ He was shocked by the Federalist sponsored festivals commemorating a British naval victory in the Indies when the Hamiltonian faction was vigorously supporting defense measures designed to protect America from an English attack. Moreover, Adams could "see no cause of joy" in the victories of either belligerent when American shipping was being swept from the seas.³⁵

The furor created by the crisis that prompted the passage of defense measures in Congress also produced a fertile seedbed and favorable climate for the resurgence of the Democratic-Republican societies

³²John Adams to Abigail Adams, March 15, 1794, Adams Papers.

³³John Adams to Abigail Adams, April 15, 1794, Adams Papers.

³⁴John Adams to Abigail Adams, March 11, 1794, Adams Papers.

³⁵John Adams to Abigail Adams, February 9, 1794, Adams Papers.

spawned by Genêt. And the clubs were particularly strong in the seaports which were populated with citizens dependent on foreign commerce. The societies were clamoring for hostilities, and Adams recognized their harm to the cause of peace, remarking that combinations of political parties and protest societies left little hope for peace.³⁶

Adams was disturbed further by the continued attempts on the part of both factions in Congress to enact coercive legislation against British shipping and debts. On March 14, Congressman William Giles of Virginia, a Republican, attempted to revive Madison's commercial propositions. Shortly afterwards, Theodore Sedgwick of Massachusetts, a Hamiltonian Federalist, proposed an embargo on all shipping. Sedgwick also requested, following Hamilton's suggestion, that a wartime army of fifteen thousand men be established.³⁷ To keep the political initiative, the Federalists defeated Giles' motions in the House and passed Sedgwick's embargo on March 25. On the following day the embargo passed the Senate.

Adams did not believe the embargo would serve any good purpose. To him, it was only one more step toward war.³⁸ The Vice-President was surprised, then, when the embargo dampened the strength and vitality of the Democratic-Republican societies. "The people here [in Philadelphia] are much cooler than they were [before the embargo became effective]. [It] begins to be felt by many who have been the

³⁶John Adams to Abigail Adams, March 17, 1794, Adams Papers.

³⁷Annals, III, 500-504, 535-41, 561. For Hamilton's role see Carroll and Ashworth, George Washington, p. 161.

³⁸John Adams to Abigail Adams, April 3, 1794, Adams Papers.

most noisy and turbulent."³⁹ Adams was particularly gratified to learn that the legislation was cooling the passions of the Bostonians.⁴⁰ But he was alarmed by the continued opposition of the Republicans to neutrality. He was anguished particularly by a motion of Johnathan Dayton of New Jersey to sequester private debts due British merchants. Adams condemned it as dishonorable and predicted that it would never pass the Senate.⁴¹

Adams remained consistently opposed to the actions of all factions and clubs to incite war. He was not afraid of an "honest war," but he saw no justification for a war prompted by the clamorings of the Democratic-Republican societies. In such a conflict, Adams remarked, "we know not who would be our enemies, nor who would be our friends, nor what we would get nor what we might lose."⁴² It was Adams' greatest fear that if the American republic became involved in war at that moment, it might imitate the horrors of the French Revolution. And saddened by the impending possibility of conflict Adams consoled himself in reflecting that "I have one comfort that in thought, word or deed, I have never encouraged a war."⁴³

Adams pessimism was relieved somewhat on April 4 when Pinckney reported from London that the November, 1793, Order-in-Council was

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹John Adams to John Quincy Adams, April 23, 1794, Adams Papers.

⁴²John Adams to John Quincy Adams, April 7, 1794, Adams Papers.

⁴³John Adams to Abigail Adams, March 27, 1794, Adams Papers.

revoked by the British government, replaced by a far less drastic measure. And while Adams believed the nation was still in great danger he was certain the worst was over. "A few of us have been steady to peace and tranquility and we still hope to avoid a fall."⁴⁴ Who Adams numbered among those dedicated to peace is difficult to ascertain. Neither the Federalists nor the Republicans in Congress were consistently pacifistic. But in Adams' estimation those most responsible for the war fever were "the old debtors to England [united] with those who [were] bribed to France."⁴⁵ He clearly indicated that the debt burdened Southerners and the "Frenchified zealots" in the Democratic-Republican societies were those who were willing to "donate this country to calamities as unnecessary as they [would] be dismal."⁴⁶

The British action in withdrawing the November Order-in-Council precipitated a small group of Federalists to encourage President Washington to send an envoy, vested with extraordinary powers, to London to negotiate a general settlement with the English. The proposal was not new. In early March, Secretary Randolph suggested the same thing, but Washington was not receptive at the time.⁴⁷

There is no evidence to indicate that the Vice-President was approached by the Federalist peace emissaries. But the Vice-President,

⁴⁴John Adams to John Quincy Adams, April 5, 1794, Adams Papers.

⁴⁵John Adams to Abigail Adams, April 5, 1794, Adams Papers.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Carroll and Ashworth, George Washington, p. 160; C. R. King, Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, 6 vols. (New York, 1894-1900), I, 542, hereafter cited as King, Life and Correspondence of Rufus King.

along with Jefferson and John Jay, were candidates Washington proposed for the embassy, though he was reluctant to supercede the resident minister, Thomas Pinckney. The Federalists sponsoring the mission, (principally, George Cabot, Oliver Ellsworth, Rufus King and Robert Morris) presented Hamilton as their candidate. Adams' nomination did not appeal to the cabal. Morris stated that Adams "was not suited temperamentally" for the task.⁴⁸ In other words, the Federalists did not trust the Vice-President whose previous mission to London was singularly fruitless. Jefferson was not seriously considered, since the Federalists believed him to be passionately anti-British and a partisan of the French. Hamilton's selection was vetoed by Washington because the President did not feel his Treasury Secretary enjoyed public confidence. Moreover, Hamilton at the very moment was under attack by a House committee for re-allocating funds without authorization.

This left Jay, the Chief Justice, and the scion of a prominent New York family whose popularity with the Federalists was boundless, but whose reputation among the Republicans was limited. Jay, like Adams, failed to wring concessions from the British when he was the Confederation's Foreign Secretary, and he was willing to yield Spain free navigation of the Mississippi River during the Jay-Gardoqui negotiation of 1787-88. Moreover, Jay was distrusted by the Southerners because as Chief Justice he rendered the majority opinion in 1793 which invalidated a Virginia law sequestrating British debts. In

⁴⁸Carroll and Ashworth, George Washington, p. 164N.

many respects Jay was the quintessence of Federalism: a staunch conservative who believed that "those who own the country ought to govern it." The Chief Justice, to be sure, was public-spirited, devoted to the Union and a paragon of virtue. But he was an anathema to the Democratic-Republican societies because he helped to bring the downfall of Genet.⁴⁹

Adams liked Jay, and he considered the Chief Justice one of his better friends. The two of them exchanged a spirited and intimate correspondence when Adams was in London. And Adams was genuinely pleased when the Senate confirmed Jay's nomination as special envoy on April 14, 1794.⁵⁰ In confirming Jay to the post the Federalists were not divided. All eighteen of them cast their votes for the envoy and his mission.

But the nomination was neither tendered to Jay nor approved by the Senate without a great clamor of protest from within the ranks of the Republicans and the societies. For practical purposes, the Republicans could not oppose the peace mission, but they did attempt to prevent the confirmation of Jay, and failing in this, strove to handicap the envoy's embassy by supporting a non-intercourse bill aimed at suppressing all trade with England.

⁴⁹See generally Frank Monahan, John Jay, Defender of Liberty, pp. 244ff, hereafter cited as Monahan, John Jay. For Jay's role in the Jay-Gardoqui negotiations see Bemis, Jay's Treaty, pp. 203-208. The Chief Justice's position on British debts is presented in Charles Warren, The Supreme Court in United States History, 2 vols. (Boston, 1926), I, 144-145.

⁵⁰John Adams to Abigail Adams, April 19, 1794, Adams Papers.

Adams was angered by the non-intercourse proposal. It would have stopped trade altogether and it would have probably hampered the Jay mission. Adams believed the Anglo-American crisis far too grave in 1794 for the Americans to demonstrate bad faith by restricting English commerce while simultaneously seeking accommodation with the British government.⁵¹ The non-intercourse resolution was, however, supported by both Republicans and Federalists. A good many Federalist Congressmen believed that the bill would give Jay a diplomatic weapon by which the envoy could wring concessions from the British. The turning point on the question came in the Senate when its members were evenly divided. Not since Adams was minister to London was his role in the American government more important than when he was required to cast the tie-breaking vote. In the Senate the "tie-wig" Hamiltonian faction denounced the non-intercourse bill as a threat to peace while the moderate Federalists and Republicans favored the proposal for reasons ranging from a desire of arming Jay with bargaining power to a hope of seeing the mission fail altogether.

Adams decided in favor of the "tie-wig" faction and thereby defeated the controversial proposal.⁵² In taking such a stand Adams was prompted unquestionably by the desire to keep the peace and certainly he was aware that Jay refused to embark for London if the non-intercourse bill passed Congress. While Adams' move played into the hands of the Federalists, the Vice-President was acting only to

⁵¹John Adams to John Quincy Adams, April 23, 1794, Adams Papers.

⁵²Annals, III, 89-90.

sustain Washington's policy. The non-intercourse issue did, however, pinpoint the Federalists' need for Adams.

But to Adams the most significant aspect of Jay's nomination and appointment was its possible effect on the Presidential succession. "If Jay should succeed [in negotiating a popular treaty]," Adams remarked, "it will recommend him to the choice of the people for President as soon as a vacancy should happen." This, Adams believed, would "weaken the hopes of the Southern States for Jefferson."⁵³ And it would weaken the hopes of the Vice-President as well.

Adams felt that he should be Washington's successor. He disliked the need for statesmen to cater to public desires and passions. Moreover, he heartily disapproved of the willingness of politicians to focus their ambitions on popularity. The Vice-President perceived that if Jay was successful, a pleased public would elect the envoy to the presidency. On the other hand, if Jay failed the Federalists would be repudiated and the first office might fall to Jefferson. Adams, in either case, would not benefit. But Adams was probably prematurely pessimistic. Jay viewed the mission in sharp contrast to Adams' assessment: "No man could form a treaty with Great Britain, however advantageous it might be to the country, who would not by his agency render himself so unpopular and odious as to blast all hope of political preferment."⁵⁴ As Adams lamented the fact that the mission

⁵³John Adams to Abigail Adams, April 19, 1794, Adams Papers.

⁵⁴Quoted in George Pellow, John Jay (New York, 1898), p. 265.

might destroy his political career, his devoted wife assured him that he was protecting the welfare of the nation. In return for his services, she wrote, the "people will one day do justice to your memory."⁵⁵

Adams was alarmed by the renewed fervor of the Democratic-Republican clubs after Jay's appointment. The societies publicly condemned the envoy, as the Vice-President described it, for his "monarchical principles, his indifference to the navigation of the Mississippi, his attachment to England [and] his aversion to France."⁵⁶ Added to this was the continued efforts on the part of Republicans in the House to enact debt sequestration bills. It was certainly clear to Adams that the Southern States were determined to avoid paying their British debts. This was, in the Vice-President's estimation, the "real object of all the wild projects and made motions which have been made during the whole session."⁵⁷

The anti-Administration demonstrations which followed the envoy's appointment were prompted also by the fact that the Senate was not playing any official role in determining Jay's instructions. Adams unquestionably was pleased and relieved when a Republican sponsored a motion requiring the instructions be revealed to the Senate was defeated. He believed that the President's prerogative in foreign affairs should be absolute and he realized that the mission would never take place if a detailed plan for Jay's diplomacy was formulated

⁵⁵Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, May 10, 1794, Adams Papers.

⁵⁶John Adams to Abigail Adams, April 19, 1794, Adams Papers.

⁵⁷John Adams to Abigail Adams, May 10, 1794, Adams Papers.

with the "advice and consent" of the Senate. But Adams was probably annoyed when he was not consulted by those drafting the instructions. Significantly, the task of preparing the instructions was shared principally by Hamilton and the "tie-wig" Federalists in the Senate --the faction most interested in an Anglo-American rapprochement.

In many respects, the envoy was going to tread over the same diplomatic coals which confronted Adams' mission in London after the Revolution. Jay was to press for a surrender of the western posts and indemnification for Negro slaves carried off during and after the Revolution. He was to demand compensation for spoliation claims against the British and insist upon a definition of contraband which did not include foodstuffs, grains or naval stores. In exchange, Jay was empowered to promise that the United States would settle unpaid debt claims up to a certain amount. Hamilton suggested that Jay be given powers to conclude a commercial treaty, provided that it allowed some American trade into the West Indies. Moreover, the envoy was to secure British endorsement of the American maritime principles of (1) free ships to make free goods and (2) free commerce to all but effectively blockaded ports. Only two immutable stipulations were outlined in Jay's instructions: the envoy was not to agree to any accord that could contravene existing treaties between the United States and France, and he was not to consent to any commercial agreement that did not permit American ships to trade in the British West Indies.⁵⁸

⁵⁸Jay's instructions are printed in full in Lowrie and Clark, American State Papers, Foreign Relations, I, 472-474. Hamilton's memorandum is in G. C. Lodge, The Works of Alexander Hamilton, 9 vols. (New York, 1885-1886), IV, 300-304, hereafter cited as Lodge, Hamilton's Works.

With the exception of the two provisions which Jay was not to traverse, his instructions permitted the envoy the greatest latitude in negotiating with the English in the spirit of friendship. Ample provisions were specified to allow Jay to settle all disputes. But armed with great bargaining authority restrained by only two relatively unimportant conditions there was no reason to anticipate that the envoy would be able to secure concessions from the English. Jay lacked a weapon to encourage the British to accommodate the United States. To lend weight to the envoy's diplomacy, then, Jay was permitted to threaten American participation in an Armed Neutrality.

Adams advocated American membership in a new Armed Neutrality of the North as a weapon to force an equitable settlement at the conference table.⁵⁹ The Vice-President was anxious for an enduring Anglo-American peace, but he was unwilling to see the United States chained to the British orbit in exchange for economic concessions. The Americans benefited from Armed Neutrality of 1780 and Adams could expect that a renewal of that league of small-navy nations would redress some American complaints against British maritime practices. Despite Adams' viewpoint and Jay's instructions, Hamilton counseled the envoy against participation in a Baltic alliance. The Treasury Secretary did not believe that threats would aid Jay in negotiations.⁶⁰

The departure of the envoy for England, in May, 1794, with the best wishes of Adams and others, was a turning point in the Anglo-

⁵⁹John Adams to Abigail Adams, April 23, 1794, Adams Papers.

⁶⁰Lodge, Hamilton's Works, IV, 308-315, 319-320.

American imbroglio. Every effort was being made on the part of the United States to resolve the crisis between the two nations. This effort, which culminated after ten years of fruitless negotiations, reflected decisively the need for the United States to live peaceably with the British. But at the same time it revealed the unmistakably growing intransigence between the Administration and its critics outside of Congress. As Adams lamented: "we go on as usual--Congress resolving one thing and the Democratic societies resolving the contrary."⁶¹ All factions in Congress were committed to Jay's negotiations in London, though the Republicans questioned the necessity of the mission. On the other hand, the clubs were threatening the very existence of the government. To this extent Adams condemned them as criminal. By fomenting prejudice and passion the societies were the greatest threat to a peaceful settlement.⁶²

As for the mission itself, Adams had "no great faith in any very brilliant [sic] success,"⁶³ but he was confident that "Mr. Jay [was] to immortalize himself over again by keeping peace."⁶⁴

⁶¹John Adams to Abigail Adams, May 10, 1794, Adams Papers.

⁶²John Adams to Abigail Adams, May 5, 1794, Adams Papers.

⁶³John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, in Cappon, Adams-Jefferson Letters, I, 255.

⁶⁴John Adams to Abigail Adams, May 5, 1794, Adams Papers.

CHAPTER IV: THE POLITICS OF RAPPROCHEMENT

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The Federalist success in promoting the peace mission of John Jay was a major victory for it stopped at least temporarily any Republican attempts to legislate economic coercion against the British. But the unpopularity of the embassy among the Republicans did not diminish. Moreover, the whole question of a possible Anglo-American rapprochement became a burning public issue. The Democratic-Republican societies in particular besieged the public forums with continuous assaults on Jay, Washington, and the mission throughout the summer of 1794.

From the time the envoy departed for London until his treaty was voted into effect nearly two years later, John Adams played a quiescent role. Remaining on the side lines the Vice-President, nonetheless, viewed the spasms of the young republic with intensity and interest.

Adams' attention, while in Braintree for the summer of 1794, was focused upon the Whiskey Rebellion in western Pennsylvania. Since the revolt could not be subdued by local authorities, the Administration was compelled to deal with it at the very moment when the issue of peace or war with England hung in the balance. Moreover, it also produced an unprecedented public condemnation of the clubs by the President at the same time that the societies were passionately

villifying the Jay mission.¹

Adams roundly supported Washington's censure of the societies' activities, contending that they could not be permitted to shake the foundations of the government. He insisted, though, "that political clubs must and ought to be lawful in every free country,"² but if the activities of the Democratic-Republican societies continued serious damage would result. The people must "either dismiss their Congress or restrain their clubs,"³ he remarked. The Vice-President was highly suspicious of the societies' intentions. Indeed, he was convinced that the clubs were attempting either to dictate public policy by the use of street demonstrations or--worse--overthrow the Administration. Adams noted that even under an enlightened government, it was not lawful "to meet and publish censures upon laws and libels upon men and measures."⁴

Adams and the Federalists warmly endorsed the Presidential denunciation of the clubs, but Washington's censure of them was attacked by the Republicans in the House. It appeared to the Madisonian faction that the President was married to the Federalists, and Madison himself believed that the censure of the societies was "perhaps the greatest

¹See generally Leland D. Baldwin, Whiskey Rebels, The Story of a Frontier Uprising (Pittsburg, 1939); pertinent documents are in Lowrie and Clark, American State Papers, Miscellaneous, I, 83-113; Carroll and Ashworth, George Washington, p. 219.

²John Adams to Abigail Adams, December 14, 1794, Adams Papers.

³John Adams to Abigail Adams, December 23, 1794, Adams Papers.

⁴John Adams to Abigail Adams, November 26, 1794, Adams Papers.

error of [Washington's] political life." From the standpoint of the Republicans the President's action abruptly ended his olympian aloofness from party politics.

The clubs were attacking the Administration and villifying Jay's mission incessantly. And when it was learned in January, 1795, of unofficial reports that Jay signed a treaty during the previous November, the societies were enraged. Since the emissary's very presence in England was anathema to the clubs, the reports of Jay's success brought perdition upon his name. The envoy was subjected to a nasty ink pot assassination by his opponents and Adams professed that his friend still had "a fiery ordeal to go through."⁵

The Vice-President viewed the villification crusade with increasing alarm. Every scrap of news from England concerning the envoy's conduct at the British court was made the object of sarcasm and criticism. Jay's social life was pictured as villainous by the societies and the pro-French newspapers.⁶ On one occasion the clubs in Philadelphia provided a vivid demonstration of what the reception of any treaty with England would be. Around the neck of an effigy of Jay

⁵John Adams to Abigail Adams, February 10, 1795, Adams Papers.

⁶Jay's antagonists alluded to the formal kiss given King George's consort as being a surrender of the nation's sovereignty; but his enemies suggested, instead, that the Chief Justice pressed a kiss on His Majesty's ass, Monahan, John Jay, p. 338. Considerable abuse was heaped on Jay because he was staying in England long after the negotiations were concluded. The envoy was suffering from rheumatism. The Philadelphia Aurora, a Republican bellweather, disdained Jay's illness: "No wonder he [Jay] should be short breathed and have palpitations as to need the Bath [England] waters to restore him after subscribing to so dishonorable a treaty as that [it is] said to have been concluded." Quoted in Bradford Perkins, The First Rapprochement: England and America, 1795-1805 (Philadelphia, 1953), p. 30, hereafter cited as Perkins, The First Rapprochement.

stuffed with gunpowder was hung one volume of the Vice-President's Defense. After suitable rites the effigy was exploded while the on-lookers gave a spirited rendition of the "Marsellaise."⁷ The association of Adams with the peace mission was based on the Vice-President's support of Washington's policies in Congress, his alleged attachment to monarchy and aristocracy and possibly a mistaken belief that Adams was intimately associated with peace embassy.

The Federalists in Congress were profoundly disturbed by the repeated anti-treaty demonstrations. Earlier protests of the Administration's neutrality policy paled before the sustained attack that the treaty and its co-author suffered during the winter of 1794-1795. Adams may well have reflected a consensus of the Federalist reaction to the demonstrations when he remarked in February of 1795 that he was "very much afraid of this treaty."⁸

Adams' fear for the treaty was prompted by the activities of the clubs. If an impassioned atmosphere hostile to the Anglo-American agreement prevailed when it was received in the United States it was conceivable that the accord might be defeated. If this was the case, the Federal government would appear no stronger to England than its predecessor. Moreover, the clubs might well replace Congress! The situation was not improved by the unfortunate delays which prevented the treaty from arriving in America until long after it was expected.

While Adams and the Senate were waiting for the fateful accord,

⁷Monahan, John Jay, pp. 388-389.

⁸John Adams to Abigail Adams, February 10, 1795, Adams Papers.

the Vice-President was asked by his wife to return home. Adams, however, was certain that Jay's dispatches would arrive before the Senate adjourned. In reply, he pleaded that if he left the capitol he "should be charged with deserting the President, forsaking the Secretary of State, betraying my friend Jay and abandoning my post."⁹ Adams could not leave the Senate when a treaty of great importance was expected daily. His presence was needed to defend the Administration's policies. Adams was convinced that the very foundations of the government as well as the prestige of the Administration depended upon all the assistance that could be mustered to sustain Jay's negotiations. It was no longer a question whether or not the government would accept the treaty, because the issue to be decided was whether or not the government could survive the treaty's negotiations. Adams was certain, though, that the treaty would be approved, thereby saving the government from ruin. But "a battle royal I expect at its ratification and smarting enough afterwards," he concluded.¹⁰

The treaty did not arrive before the fourth of March, and the Senate adjourned sine die after Washington requested its successor to meet in a special session on June 8. The new Senate would be dominated by more Federalists than its predecessor. Federalist electoral victories in the fall of 1794, won on the strength of the Whiskey Rebellion, gave the Federalist party twenty seats in the upper chamber. Adams confidently asserted that "the Senate for the next two years

⁹John Adams to Abigail Adams, February 2, 1795, Adams Papers.

¹⁰John Adams to Abigail Adams, February 9, 1795, Adams Papers.

will be the most decidedly for peace and order of any which has served under the Constitution."¹¹ Certainly Adams' confidence in the treaty's eventual acceptance was based on Federalist voting strength in the Senate.

Three days after Adams left Philadelphia the treaty was delivered in the capital. In a tense letter of transmittal the envoy stated he had "no reason to believe or conjecture that one more favorable to us is attainable."¹² But Jay conceded to Rufus King that "if I entirely escape censure I shall be agreeably disappointed."¹³ Jay knew that it was impossible to satisfy the demands of factions which opposed the mission in the first place.

After Adams' frustrated attempts to bridge the Anglo-American imbroglio, Jay's diplomacy represented the better efforts of an American to resolve ancient disputes, to adjudicate countervailing claims and to keep the peace. In contrast to Adams' mission, however, Jay negotiated with Englishmen deeply involved in war. In fact, during the negotiations the British were confronted with vacillating allies and calamitous defeats, a serious grain shortage and a mutinous Navy.¹⁴ The British did not desire war with the United States. Indeed, as one

¹¹John Adams to Abigail Adams, February 11, 1795, Adams Papers.

¹²John Jay to George Washington, London, November 19, 1794, in Lowrie and Clark, American State Papers, Foreign Relations, I, 503.

¹³Quoted in C. R. King, Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, 6 vols. (New York, 1894-1900), I, 582.

¹⁴Ward and Gooch, History of British Foreign Policy, I, 252-254.

British consul pointed out the Americans were "so much in debt to [England] that we scarcely dare quarrel with them."¹⁵ In such an atmosphere Adams surely could have wrung concessions from the British.

Under Jay's Treaty the British were required to withdraw from the disputed posts by June 1, 1796.¹⁶ In exchange for this concession the United States agreed to bi-national arbitration of all bona fide British debt claims which further provided that the federal government pay all certified claims. An additional arbitration commission was established by the treaty to adjudicate depredations claims arising from attacks by the British on American ships and spoliations by American privateers' (holding French letters-of-marque) vessels. Both nations were forbidden to sequester public or private debts or contracts due in either nation on account of national differences.

In satisfying one of the immutable conditions in his instructions, Jay secured limited American trade in the West Indies. United States vessels were permitted to take American produce and manufactures in ships weighing less than seventy tons into the Indies and carry away in the same ships tropical produce. This commerce was granted to the Americans provided that the United States agreed not to export in American ships molasses, sugar, coffee, cocoa or cotton from its shores or from the Indies to any port in the world. In

¹⁵Mayo, Instructions to British Ministers, p. 60N.

¹⁶There are innumerable works which contain the full treaty text. See Hunter Miller, ed., Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States, 1783-1855 (Washington, 1931-1942), 6 vols., II, 245-267; in Bemis, Jay's Treaty, pp. 252-271, there is a complete delineation of the treaty's articles together with the projects.

short, the United States could not revive the colonial trade pattern from which the Americans benefited most before 1774. In spite of these limitations, Americans were granted open trade in the East Indies and they were permitted to carry American produce and manufactures in United States vessels to certain imperial ports. In exchange for these concessions the British were given a ten-year guarantee against discriminatory duties and tonnage restrictions and the right to levy countervailing duties on American ships and goods.

Contraband was divided into two classes. Absolute contraband was to be confiscated when found, but conditional contraband (provisions, foodstuffs) was to be indemnified when seized. Indemnification was to comprise "the full value of all such articles, with reasonable mercantile profit thereon, together with the freight and demurrage."

Another arbitration commission was created to settle boundary disputes between the United States and Canada. Privateers, other than Englishmen or Americans, were forbidden to sell their prizes and refill their ships in the ports of either nation. To satisfy the other "immutable condition" Jay and his diplomatic adversary agreed that nothing in the treaty would conflict with any public accords between either of the two controlling powers and third parties.

Unfortunately, Jay was unable to secure a British endorsement of American maritime principles. As a result the envoy accepted de facto the Rule of 1756 which provided that trade closed in peace could not be opened in war and other naval devices employed by Great

Britain to suppress neutral trade with her enemies.¹⁷ Moreover, Jay was not able to collect compensation for the slaves and other property carried away by the British in 1783. Despite his instructions, Jay did not negotiate with any of the Baltic powers in an attempt to revive the Armed Neutrality. Actually, the possibility of a renewal of the league of small navy powers was minimal, since Russia was pledged by a treaty (1793) with England to suppress any revival of the alliance.¹⁸

For two months the provisions of Jay's treaty were kept secret from the public, and while Adams was awaiting to return to the capital the Democratic-Republican societies continued their attacks on Washington, Jay and the treaty. Scurrilous extracts from the accord were published to muster support for a citizens assault on the agreement. Senators were instructed by committees and cabals to defeat the treaty. As Adams predicted, a storm awaited the Anglo-American in the Senate and in the streets.¹⁹

Adams was not privy to the contents of Jay's Treaty until the Senate convened on June 8, 1795. On the whole, the Vice-President considered the treaty compatible with American interest, though he unquestionably thought he could have secured more for his countrymen. The surrender of the posts, which Adams believed necessary for any settlement, would enhance the dignity of the young republic while it

¹⁷Miller, Federalist Era, p. 166.

¹⁸Ward and Gooch, History of British Foreign Policy, I, 238.

¹⁹Perkins, The First Rapprochement, pp. 32-35.

lessened tension in the Northwest.²⁰ Payment of the pre-war debts of Americans due British creditors was an acceptable concession, in Adams' opinion.²¹ Since he earlier pressed for indemnification of English spoliation on American shipping, the Vice-President was undoubtedly satisfied with the treaty's provisions establishing arbitration commissions to pay claims.²² And Adams fully agreed that it was impolitic and improper to sequester any debt. Though Jay's Treaty with Great Britain contained none of the maritime principles which were incorporated by the United States into treaties with small-navy powers, Adams realized that the United States was powerless to enforce its neutrality precepts without a navy.²³ The Vice-President was displeased with the West Indies trade provisions in Article Twelve. "To restrain ourselves from exporting whatever we please is humiliating and a mean surrender of a part of our independence," he remarked.²⁴ Indeed, the Americans fought a revolution, in part, to free their trade from the strictures of English economic policy.

When the Senate commenced debate on the treaty the party spirit which prevailed in the previous session was markedly evident. The Federalists voted to keep the proceedings and the treaty secret from

²⁰John Adams to Abigail Adams, February 11, 1795, Adams Papers.

²¹Dauer, Adams Federalists, p. 62.

²²John Adams to Abigail Adams, April 3, 1794, Adams Papers.

²³John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, London, July 31, 1786, in Cappon, Adams-Jefferson Letters, I, 146-147.

²⁴John Adams to John Quincy Adams, New York, June 29, 1795, Adams Papers.

the public over violent Republican objections. The Republicans hoped to muster pressure from outside of the Senate in order to defeat the accord.

Adams used his position to assist twenty Federalists in maintaining complete solidarity and nearly absolute control over all phases of the debate. Since there was a prevailing dislike in both factions for the West Indies trade provisions in Article Twelve, the Federalists proposed and voted a partial suspension of that Article. The best efforts of the Republicans to defeat the treaty by crippling amendments, dilatory debate and remonstrances were unsuccessful.

The envoy was denounced for yielding the concession of a ten-year American moratorium on levying discriminatory duties, and Jay was condemned for failing to gain recognition for American maritime principles.

The Republicans nearly broke Federalist solidarity by centering their final attack on Jay's failure to secure compensation for the slaves. All of the Federalist Senators south of the Mason-Dixon line voted for a motion to have negotiations renewed over this point, but a close vote gave victory to the Federalist phalanx from the northern states.

Adams was obviously pleased with the Federalists' ability to keep the offensive in the debates. He observed that the proceedings were "temperate, grave, decent and wise."²⁵ On the other hand, the Republicans were enraged by their opponent's ability to rout all

²⁵John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, June 14, 1795, Adams Papers.

opposition to the treaty. In fact, Federalist predominance led Henry Tazewell, a Republican from Virginia, to declare that the entire debate "was the most uncandid and unfair proceeding I have ever witnessed."²⁶

The Federalists domination of the debate yielded victory. On June 24, 1795, by a vote of 20 to 10, the Senate approved the treaty without the West Indies trade article. And after the session adjourned Adams returned to his home in Braintree, observing from a distance the "battles royal" which were waged over the accord throughout the nation during the summer and fall of 1795. In spite of the animosity of the crowds and the unpopularity of the treaty, the Vice-President was convinced that "the treaty will become the law and be carried into execution."²⁷

When news reached Adams in Quincy in early July that the British were confiscating American grain ships bound for French ports, the Vice-President almost despaired. It was a sad revelation of American weakness and a blunt reminder of British power. Enraged by the apparent betrayal of the English Adams cried: "I wish that misfortune and adversity could soften the temper and humiliate the insolence of John Bull." And lamenting the fact that Americans were powerless to retaliate, Adams forewarned that at some distant time in the future "it is to be the destiny of America to beat down [John Bull's] pride."²⁸

²⁶Quoted in Carroll and Ashworth, George Washington, p. 251N.

²⁷John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Braintree, August 25, 1795, Adams Papers.

²⁸John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, June 19, 1795, Adams Papers.

The British spoliations fed fuel to the anti-treaty forces and prompted more anglophobes to demonstrate against Jay and the ill-fated agreement. In New York, Hamilton was stoned by a mob when he attempted to speak on behalf of the treaty.²⁹ And in Philadelphia prominent Republicans, including Frederick Mahlenberg, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, impaled the treaty on a stick and marched through the city. Windows in the British minister's residence were broken and Federalists' homes were despoiled with paint.³⁰

Adams was unaware that the furor of the anti-treaty forces and the renewed British depredations disturbed the President so much that he refused to ratify the agreement until the English withdrew the most recent Order-in-Council. But when he later learned of Washington's hesitation, Adams remarked that the President should have signed the treaty promptly. Such an act, Adams believed, might have quelled much of the opposition to the Administration at a time when the government needed to convey its strength.³¹

The treaty was ratified in August after Edmund Randolph, the Secretary of State, was implicated in a plot to serve the interests of France.³² The revelation of Randolph's alleged conspiracy convinced

²⁹Miller, Federalist Era, p. 168.

³⁰Monahan, John Jay, pp. 388-389.

³¹John Adams to Abigail Adams, January 7, 1796, Adams Papers.

³²The story of Randolph's alleged perfidy is related in many secondary sources. See Irving Brant, "Edmund Randolph, Not Guilty!" William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series, VII (1950), 180-189; W. W. Ford, ed., "Edmund Randolph on the British Treaty," American Historical Review, XII (1907), 587-599; Josiah T. Newcomb, "New Lights on Jay's Treaty," American Journal of International Law, XXVIII (1934), 687.

the President that the government might be further endangered unless the accord was signed. After Washington signed the treaty the Republicans and the Democratic-Republican societies concentrated on gathering support to defeat the agreement in the House of Representatives. Their chances appeared bright, since a majority of the House and the Speakership were Republican.

Despite the obvious difficulty Jay's Treaty would find in the lower chamber, Adams was confident it would be carried into effect. He was grateful to learn on returning to the capitol in December, 1795, that many Congressmen were anxious to vote appropriations to carry the Anglo-American accord into effect. And he remarked that "a great majority will support the government and the treaty." Adams believed both would be sustained in the House.³³ The Vice-President was encouraged further by a series of newspaper articles supporting the treaty published by Hamilton in New York.³⁴ It appeared to Adams that the treaty crisis was going to pass into history.

A hostile House started war on the treaty the day after it was proclaimed by Washington in February, 1796. Adams was alarmed by ferocity of the Republicans and the prospect of the popular chamber refusing to accede to the accord: "If the House of Representatives condemn this treaty and defeat its operation I see nothing but dissolution of government and immediate war. President, Senate and House all dissolve and old Congress revives, debts are all cancelled, paper

³³John Adams to Abigail Adams, December 12, 1795, Adams Papers.

³⁴John Adams to Abigail Adams, January 31, 1796, Adams Papers.

money issued and forced into circulation by the bayonets, and in short heaven and earth set at defiance."³⁵ But the Vice-President could not believe "that they [the Republicans] will be so desperate and unreasonable."³⁶

The anti-treaty forces in the House, led by James Madison, fashioned their attack on Jay's accord by condemning it as the partisan act of a party willing to surrender the nation's sovereignty. And the nation at large mirrored the Republican hostility. The countryside burned with meetings, and newspapers flamed with editorials. There was disunion in the air and Adams was exasperated. "I sometimes think," he wrote, "that I am laboring in vain and spending my life for nought in a fruitless endeavor to pursue a union that, being detested on both sides, cannot long last."³⁷

But the excesses of the Republicans and the ever present Democratic-Republican societies began to backfire. The uncertainty of the treaty's fate led to general trade stagnation in Boston, Philadelphia and New York. Insurance underwriters refused to insure cargoes, and merchants dismissed their employees. This, in turn, led an aroused citizenry in New England to demand that the treaty be voted into execution. To counterbalance the more prejudicial character of the treaty's opposition, dispassionate groups of merchants and others signed petitions and issued protests calling upon the House of

³⁵John Adams to Abigail Adams, March 11, 1796, Adams Papers.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷John Adams to Abigail Adams, March 7, 1796, Adams Papers.

Representatives to vote the appropriations and keep the nation free from internecine strife.³⁸ Nonetheless, opposition persisted in the South.

Adams was angered by the continued intransigence of the Southern States. The Vice-President condemned as "sordid" a South Carolinian legislative resolution that denounced Jay for failing to secure compensation for the slaves.³⁹ To the Vice-President this act demonstrated the unwillingness of the Southerners to support the government. During the crisis of 1794 the Southerners were willing to risk war to avoid paying their debts. In 1796 the same faction was willing to eschew peace on the issue of the slaves.

Adams' pessimism grew manifest when the House voted overwhelmingly to call for Jay's instructions. While the Vice-President felt the representatives were entitled to review the executive papers related to the treaty, he opposed their attempt to abuse this power. Furthermore, the lower chamber appeared to be grasping for the powers of its related branches. Adams lamented: "The House of Representatives seem determined to dictate to the whole government,"⁴⁰ and the result could only be chaos and disunion. Washington refused to surrender Jay's instructions to the House. The President's action was condemned by the Republicans, but the anti-treaty forces were defeated. Finally, on April 30, 1796, Jay's handiwork was carried into effect.

³⁸ Charles, Origins of the American Party System, pp. 112-113.

³⁹ John Adams to Abigail Adams, January 20, 1796, Adams Papers.

⁴⁰ John Adams to Abigail Adams, April 19, 1796, Adams Papers.

CHAPTER V: JAY'S TREATY

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The Jay mission and the resulting treaty were the fruition of Federalist foreign policy and they represented the ascendancy of the Federalists in the counsels of government. For Adams, the negotiations and the accord were the salvation of the government. Moreover, the treaty proved to be quite beneficial to the United States.

During Adams' presidency the commercial provisions in the treaty were to blossom. The concessions which the United States received from Great Britain under the accord increased American trade with the British Empire threefold before 1800. Americans exploited the India trade, and by 1801 they were competing with the East India Company for European markets. The partial suspension of Article Twelve, which placed restraints on American exports, yielded considerable benefits. In the first place, Americans continued to trade with the British West Indies in their own ships because the local British officials badly needed foodstuffs and naval stores. Besides, the United States was able to export cotton to England. When Jay was negotiating with the British, cotton exports were not important in the United States, but after the invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney in 1793 the production of the fibre increased. In 1796 six thousand pounds of cotton were exported to England and in 1801 total fibre exports to the British Isles exceeded twenty million pounds.¹

¹Perkins, The First Rapprochement, pp. 13-14, 70-71.

The withdrawal of the British from the western posts was completed in July, 1796. Ironically, the United States was unable to take control on the frontier until after the deadline and as a result the English were asked to remain in authority until after American soldiers could be sent.² the various arbitration commissions established under the treaty resolved the thorny problems of debts, spoliation claims and boundaries with varying degrees of success during Adams' and Jefferson's administrations.

It was true that the fruits of the treaty could not be anticipated by anyone in 1795, but on the other hand if the Anglo-American imbroglio had continued to fester, war might have ensued. The Federalists were anxious to prevent a rupture in Anglo-American relations and Jay's negotiations provided them the opportunity to resolve the menacing crisis of 1794. They grasped for the machinery of party politics and forged their policies into victory over the vociferous opposition of the Republicans in Congress and the societies in the streets.

The Federalists displayed exceptionally astute political acumen in handling the mission and the treaty's passage through Congress. In refusing to permit Jay's instructions to be drafted with the aid of the Senate, the Federalists insured a successful mission while establishing a significant precedent in the management of foreign affairs.³

²Miller, Federalist Era, p. 176.

³Ralston Hayden, The Senate and Treaties, 1789-1817: The Development of the Treaty-Making Function of the United States Senate During the Formative Period (New York, 1920), p. 92.

The High Federalist leadership in both houses of Congress, under Hamilton's tutelage, resisted nearly every Republican attack. The full weight of Washington's prestige was utilized to sustain the Federalist cause.⁴ The essence of their position was the need to support the treaty and its negotiation or dismiss the government.

Adams, not unlike the Federalists, believed that it was imperative to accept the treaty or face disunion. He felt that Republican opposition to the treaty was based solely on a desire to weaken, if not destroy, the federal government and send the nation into the arms of the French. As a result the Vice-President was incapable of understanding bona fide political objections to the treaty.

While it is true that the Republicans devoted an inordinate amount of attention to really minor issues, such as Jay's failure to secure payment for the slaves emancipated by the British, there were several objectionable features in the treaty that enraged Republican consciences. The seedbed of their disgust was the ten-year moratorium on American discriminatory duties. To the treaty's opponents this provision was an outright surrender of the nation's sovereignty and a direct assault upon the Republicans' chief dueling weapon--economic coercion. Secondly, by failing to insist that at least a portion of the country's maritime principles be written into the agreement,

⁴By a tradition that is old as Jay's Treaty, Washington was allegedly opposed to the results of the envoy's negotiations. But the most recent biography of President Washington fails to substantiate this thesis. See Carroll and Ashworth, George Washington, p. 237, and Bemis, Jay's Treaty, p. ii. The President utilized the peace mission to gain prestige for the American government. He was anxious to avoid war and he hoped that Jay's negotiation would lead to a general settlement of all Anglo-American differences. See his letter to Edmund Randolph, April 14, 1794, in W. C. Ford's edition of The Writings of George Washington, 14 vols. (New York, 1889-1893), XII, 419.

Jay was accepting the Rule of 1756. This aspect of the treaty violated the spirit, if not the letter, of the Franco-American alliance of 1778 since it would restrain American trade with the French Indies. And the Republicans were anxious to direct as much trade to the French as possible. Finally, Jay's willingness to have the central government assume the obligations for paying private debts due English creditors appeared to the Republicans as an affront to national honor. In short, the Republicans believed that the treaty was binding the Americans to the British Empire.⁵

The Federalist's opponents lacked the political leadership necessary to thwart the treaty's passage. There was no strong party leaders in the Senate and James Madison was incapable of dominating the faction in the House. The Republicans could not gain the support of Washington for their cause. And Jefferson, the party's titular philosopher, did little to assist the Republicans in their attack on the treaty.⁶ But the accord did give the Republicans a campaign issue for 1796.

Adams appreciated the significance of the treaty and its negotiations. And his public reticence during the debates in the Senate and the House revealed his complete awareness that the central theme of the presidential elections of 1796 would be the treaty. For instance, after the Senate met in June, 1795, Adams dined with the President. Apparently both of them discussed the negotiations at length, and

⁵Dumas Malone, Jefferson and the Ordeal of Liberty (Boston, 1962), p. 254.

⁶Ibid., Chapter xvi.

possibly the Vice-President was enjoined by Washington to withhold any public judgment of the accord. Adams related to his wife, after the meeting, that he was not going to express a word "on the fate of the treaty."⁷ He repeatedly cautioned his wife against discussing the treaty or the merits of its negotiation with others. Besides, Adams worked tirelessly himself to appear neutral throughout the summer of 1795 and the winter of 1796. And though he avoided public sympathy for either the treaty's opponents or supporters, the Vice-President lamented: "I have no voice [in the proceedings] and although the fate of the treaty will not be justly imputable to me in any degree, yet there is reason to expect that many will suspect me; and others charge me with a greater share [of influence] than would belong to me if I had a voice."⁸ Obviously, Adams remained distrusted by the Republican faction. His aid to the Federalists was known by all.

Adams' concern was genuine. The anti-treaty forces identified the Vice-President with the mission. Adams overturned the non-intercourse bill in 1794 and he was certainly a supporter of Washington's neutrality policy. In attempting to appear neutral throughout the course of the proceedings in Congress, Adams was also laying the groundwork for the presidential sweepstakes. Many of those who took public stands on the fruit of Jay's negotiations committed political suicide.⁹

⁷John Adams to Abigail Adams, June 14, 1795, Adams Papers.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Perkins, The First Rapprochement, p. 31.

For example, Jay escaped possible impeachment by resigning the Chief Justiceship to become Governor of New York. Adams noted that it was "happy that Mr. Jay's election was over before the treaty was published; for the parties against him would have quarrelled with the treaty, right or wrong, that they might give color to their animosity against him."¹⁰ Jay's successor to the high judicial office, John Rutledge of South Carolina, was refused confirmation by the Senate because he was an outspoken opponent of the treaty. Adams remarked that "justices must not go to illegal meetings and become popular orators in favor of sedition."¹¹ Humphreys Marshall, a nominal Federalist from Kentucky who voted for the accord in the Senate, was recalled by the state's legislature for his deed.¹² And Frederick Muhlenberg, the Speaker of the House, was stabbed by his brother-in-law after the Speaker broke the deadlock over the treaty in the House.¹³ With these examples before him, Adams was not anxious to tie his political future to the treaty.

Despite the political hazards which came in the wake of Jay's Treaty Adams was convinced that Anglo-American accommodation was necessary for the nation to withstand the pressure of the European wars. The treaty yielded more to the United States than the Treaty of Ghent concluded in 1814. It strengthened the fundamental underpinnings of the nation's foreign policy and it assured at least ten

¹⁰John Adams to Abigail Adams, June 18, 1795, Adams Papers.

¹¹John Adams to Abigail Adams, December 17, 1795, Adams Papers.

¹²Perkins, The First Rapprochement, p. 31.

¹³Miller, Federalist Era, p. 176.

years of peace with Great Britain. Indeed, if Britain extended recognition to the United Colonies in the temper of defiance in 1783, she confirmed the sovereignty of the United States in the spirit of amity in 1795. And to John Adams the treaty assured the United States a few badly needed economic concessions, it permitted the arbitration of bi-national grievances and it vouchsafed peace.¹⁴

¹⁴Historiographical controversy has plagued Jay's Treaty since it was negotiated over a century and a half ago. In the twentieth century the debate has centered on Samual Flagg Bemis' monograph, Jay's Treaty: A Study in Commerce and Diplomacy. Bemis concludes that the British were stifling American commerce by their refusal to permit any sizeable degree of trade between the two nations. And England hoped to create a neutral barrier of Indian states along the American-Canadian frontier to prevent American expansion. Furthermore, Professor Bemis claims that Hamilton compromised Jay's bargaining power by privately instructing the envoy not to threaten the British with American participation in a renewal of the Armed Neutrality. He suggests, on the basis of Hamilton's interference with the mission, that the treaty should be dubbed "Hamilton's Treaty." In the final analysis, Bemis asserts that Jay failed to secure any valuable concession from the British except the withdrawal of the English from the disputed posts.

Bemis' interpretation of the events was virtually unchallenged for nearly two decades. And nearly all biographies of Jay's contemporaries in government since that time have incorporated Bemis' conclusions. As a result biographers of the Founding Fathers have claimed their subjects condemned the treaty. For instance, both Gilbert Chinard and Page Smith in their respective biographies of John Adams claim that the Vice-President disapproved of the Anglo-American accord. Only Manning Dauer in his study, The Adams Federalists, concedes that John Adams was satisfied with results of Jay's negotiations.

It was not until the publication of Professor Burt's book, The United States, Great Britain and British North America, in 1940, that Bemis' interpretation was examined critically. Burt points to evidence that indicates Bemis overemphasized the British desire to create a neutral barrier of Indian states between the United States and Canada. Burt contends that the English were willing to surrender the posts and evacuate the frontier as soon as the Americans paid their debts and demonstrated that they could exercise authority over the Indians. He also points out that there was considerably more trade between Americans and Canadians than Bemis admitted.

A more recent study of American diplomacy during the Federalist era, Alexander DeConde's Entangling Alliance, supports the Bemis thesis that Hamilton was largely, if not solely, responsible for the

course and results of Jay's negotiations. But DeConde concedes that in 1794 the United States could not have secured any more from the British.

By far the most judicious treatment of Jay's Treaty is given in Bradford Perkins, The First Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1795-1805. Professor Perkins contends that the treaty was not only quite beneficial to the United States, but all that Jay could possibly secure in 1794. He points to evidence that indicates conclusively the British government extended important commercial concessions to the Americans despite widespread Parliamentary objection. Moreover, Perkins relates the story of expanding American trade during the decade of rapprochement. These conclusions were reached also by H. C. Allen in Great Britain and the United States, A History of Anglo-American Relations, 1783-1952.

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